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## Requirements for Certification Bodies Operating Forest Management Certification



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## CONTENTS

1	Scope .....	6
2	Normative references .....	6
3	Terms and definitions .....	6
4	Principles .....	6
4.1	General .....	6
4.2	Impartiality .....	6
4.3	Competence .....	6
4.4	Responsibility .....	7
4.5	Openness .....	7
4.6	Confidentiality .....	7
4.7	Responsiveness to complaints .....	7
4.8	Risk-based approach .....	7
5	General requirements .....	7
6	Structural requirements .....	7
7	Resource requirements .....	7
7.1	Competence of personnel .....	7
7.2	Personnel involved in the certification activities .....	7
7.3	Use of individual external auditors and external technical experts .....	9
7.4	Personnel records .....	9
7.5	Outsourcing .....	9
8	Information requirements .....	9
8.1	Public information .....	9
8.2	Certification documents .....	10
8.3	Reference to certification and use of marks .....	10
8.4	Confidentiality .....	10
8.5	Information exchange between a certification body and its clients .....	10
9	Process requirements .....	10
9.1	Pre-certification activities .....	10
9.2	Planning audits .....	15
9.3	Initial certification .....	16
9.4	Conducting audits .....	17
9.5	Certification decision .....	18
9.6	Maintaining certification .....	19
9.7	Appeals .....	20
9.8	Complaints .....	20
9.9	Client records .....	20
10	Management system requirements for certification bodies .....	20
	Annex 1 (normative): PEFC notification of certification bodies .....	21
	Annex 2 (normative): Accreditations accepted by the PEFC Council .....	22
	Annex 3 (normative): Group forest management certification .....	23

## Foreword

The document “Requirements for Certification Bodies Operating Forest Management Certification” 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 1005:2021 on 11.11.2021.

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.

This document replaces technical document TD SFCS 1005:2014, Issue 3, *Requirements for certification bodies operating forest management certification*.

## Introduction

The aim of forest management certification is, in a credible way, to ensure conformity of the forest management with the criteria of sustainable forest management defined in TD SFCS 1003 *Sustainable Forest Management - Requirements*. The aim of this document is to define specific and additional requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of forest management so that the certification results and issued certificates can be mutually comparable with other forest certification systems.

## 1 Scope

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 based on the technical documents TD SFCS 1002:2021 and TD SFCS 1003:2021.

## 2 Normative references

For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

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

STN EN ISO/IEC 17021-1, *Conformity assessment. Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems*

PEFC ST 1001, *PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements*

PEFC ST 1002, *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements*

PEFC ST 1003, *Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements*

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 1007:2020, *PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements*

ND SFCS 005 *Training of Participants in the Certification Process for the Application of Slovak Forest Certification System*

## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this standard, the relevant definitions given in STN EN ISO/IEC 17000, STN EN ISO/IEC 17021-1 and the document TD SFCS 1001:2021 *Slovak Forest Certification System – Description and Context* apply.

## 4 Principles

### 4.1 General

4.1.1 All the requirements given in clause 4.1 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

4.1.2 The criteria against which the client organisation's forest management is evaluated are those outlined in latest version of TD SFCS 1003 and TD SFCS 1002.

### 4.2 Impartiality

All the requirements given in clause 4.2 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### 4.3 Competence

All the requirements given in clause 4.3 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

#### **4.4 Responsibility**

All the requirements given in clause 4.4 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

#### **4.5 Openness**

All the requirements given in clause 4.5 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

#### **4.6 Confidentiality**

All the requirements given in clause 4.6 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

#### **4.7 Responsiveness to complaints**

All the requirements given in clause 4.7 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

#### **4.8 Risk-based approach**

All the requirements given in clause 4.8 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **5 General requirements**

5.1 All the requirements given in clause 5 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

5.2 At least one of the members of the mandatory established Committee of interested parties shall be a representative of the PEFC national governing body and the certification scheme owner.

5.3 Member of the Committee of interested parties – a representative of the PEFC national governing body, shall have the access to all the information and the right to participate in accreditation body's audit witnessing of audits carried by certification body and in audits and conformity assessments of forest management systems with the criteria of sustainable forest management.

5.4 Representative of PEFC national governing body – member of the Committee of interested parties have the right to take independent action, if the top management of the certification body does not respect the advice of this Committee, and to inform the Council of the SFCS national governing body on this situation. In taking independent action he/she shall respect the confidentiality requirements relating to the applicants of the certification body. The certification body shall inform its client organisations about this matter.

### **6 Structural requirements**

All the requirements given in clause 6 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **7 Resource requirements**

#### **7.1 Competence of personnel**

All the requirements given in clause 7.1 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

#### **7.2 Personnel involved in the certification activities**

All the requirements given in clause 7.2 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

## **7.2.1 Auditors**

### **7.2.1.1 Education**

The certification body shall ensure that auditors have the knowledge corresponding to at least a secondary education that includes or is supplemented with courses related to the area of forestry.

*Note:* Secondary education is that part of the national education system that comes after the primary or elementary stage, but that is completed prior to entrance to the tertiary, i.e. university or similar educational institution.

### **7.2.1.2 Forest management training**

The certification body shall ensure that auditors, in the last two years, have participated in an education programme in forest management that is recognised by the PEFC Council or the PEFC national governing body responsible for the Slovak Forest Certification System.

### **7.2.1.3 Audit training**

The certification body shall ensure that auditors have successfully completed training in audit techniques based on ISO 19011.

### **7.2.1.4 Working experience**

7.2.1.4.1 The certification body shall ensure that auditors have at least 6 years full time experience in forestry and hold a licence of professional forest manager or a licence for elaboration of forest management plans (licences valid for the territory of the Slovak Republic).

7.2.1.4.2 Professional competencies can be ensured by involving a technical expert who meets the defined requirements into the team of auditors.

### **7.2.1.5 Audit experience**

7.2.1.5.1 For a first qualification of an auditor, the certification body shall ensure that the auditor within the last three years has performed at least four forest management audits under the leadership of a qualified auditor.

7.2.1.5.2 The number of audits in training can be reduced by two audits for auditors that are qualified for ISO 9001 or 14001 auditing in forestry sector.

7.2.1.5.3 For maintaining the qualification of the auditor, the certification body shall ensure that the auditor has performed a minimum of five external audits per year including at least two forest management audits where the sum of these audits should cover at least seven man-day of audit work.

### **7.2.1.6 Competencies**

7.2.1.6.1 The certification body shall ensure that auditors demonstrate ability to apply knowledge and skills in the following areas:

- principles, requirements, criteria or indicators of the forest management standard;
- knowledge of the socio-demographics and cultural issues in the group of application of the forest management standard;
- audit principles, procedures and techniques: to enable the auditor to apply those appropriate to different audits and ensure that audits are conducted in a consistent and systematic manner.
- organisation situations including organizational size, structure, functions and relationships, general business processes and related terminology and cultural and



social customs such as knowledge of the client organisation working language: to enable the auditor to comprehend the organisation's operational context.

- legislation, regulations or other relevant requirements – enabling the auditor to operate in the right legal framework and to be aware of the legislative requirements applicable to the group which is the subject of the audit;
- the principles of forest management based on techniques involving inventories, forest cropping, planning, protection and the management of forest ecosystems – to enable the auditor to examine the forest management scheme and to decide whether it is being adequately applied;
- natural environment science, environmental technology and the economic principles applicable to forest management – to give the auditor a grasp of the fundamental relations between human activities and sustainable forest management;
- technical aspects of forestry operations associated with exploitations, technology and derived uses – to allow the auditor to grasp the activities of the region audited and their effects on the management itself and the territory.

7.2.1.6.2 The certification body shall provide evidence of annual monitoring of forest management auditors applying methods such as audit witnessing, reviewing audit reports or client organisations' feedback, etc. based on the frequency of their usage and the level of risk linked to their activities. In particular, the certification body shall review the competence of its personnel in the light of their performance in order to identify training needs.

#### **7.2.2 Further certification body staff**

Further certification body staff involved in the PEFC certification programme shall have at least basic knowledge of the Slovak Forest Certification System.

### **7.3 Use of individual external auditors and external technical experts**

All the requirements given in clause 7.3 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **7.4 Personnel records**

All the requirements given in clause 7.4 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **7.5 Outsourcing**

All the requirements given in clause 7.5 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

## **8 Information requirements**

### **8.1 Public information**

8.1.1 All the requirements given in clause 8.1 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

8.1.2 The certification body shall inform the PEFC national governing body about upcoming scheduled certification and surveillance audits in advance.

8.1.3 The certification body shall make a summary of the audit report which shall be made publicly available by the certificate holder. Confidential data can be excluded. The summary shall include at least the following:

- a) information about the certificate holder
- b) audit scope, objectives and process
- c) audit plan (dates, locations, audit team)
- d) audit results (main findings, corrective action)

## **8.2 Certification documents**

8.2.1 All the requirements given in clause 8.2 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

8.2.2 Certification bodies shall add to the certificate an accreditation mark as prescribed by the accreditation body (including accreditation number where applicable), and the date of granting, extending or renewing certification and the expiry date or recertification due date. The effective date on a certification document shall not be before the date of the certification decision.

## **8.3 Reference to certification and use of marks**

All the requirements given in clause 8.3 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

## **8.4 Confidentiality**

8.4.1 All the requirements given in clause 8.4 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

8.4.2 The certification body shall inform the applicant that it is obliged to provide information to the PEFC Council and PEFC national governing body. In order to comply with the ISO/IEC 17021-1 requirements for confidentiality, the certification body shall have the written consent of the group applicant for the information disclosed to the PEFC Council or PEFC national governing body.

## **8.5 Information exchange between a certification body and its clients**

All the requirements given in clause 8.5 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

# **9 Process requirements**

## **9.1 Pre-certification activities**

### **9.1.1 Application**

9.1.1.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.1.1 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.1.1.2 The applicant for group certification shall provide the certification body at least with the following information:

- a) general information about the applicant, name, address, legal status and organisational form,
- b) list of forest owners/managers participating in the group certification, including their identification and statement on commitment to certification criteria,
- c) description of the area of the group organisation. The description shall cover at list the indicators in 9.1.3.3.
- d) forest management procedures of the group organisation as defined in the forest management standard.

### **9.1.2 Application review**

All the requirements given in clause 9.1.2 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **9.1.3 Audit programme**

9.1.3.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.1.3 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.1.3.2 The audit programme shall include a two-stage initial audit, surveillance audits in the first to the fourth year, and a recertification audit in the fifth year prior to expiration of

certification. The five-year certification cycle begins with the certification or recertification decision.

9.1.3.3 The certification body shall have documented procedures for a risk assessment of the group organisation. The risk assessment shall identify risks which can prevent the successful implementation of the sustainable forest management standard and the certification of the management system. This risk assessment shall consider at least the following indicators:

- a) structure, operations, processes and products
  - i. size of management units (different size classes)
  - ii. biogeographic of area (e.g. lowlands, middle mountains, alpine localities)
  - iii. operations, processes and products of group participants
- b) deforestation and forest conversion
- c) rotation period
- d) richness of biological diversity
- e) recreation and other socio-economic functions of the forests
- f) dependence of and interaction with local communities
- g) available resources for administration, operations, training and research
- h) forest governance and law enforcement in the country or region of the client's organisation
  - i. forest ownership type (state, community, municipal, private)
  - ii. governance and law enforcement

9.1.3.4 The preconditions for determining the risk at low, medium and high level according to the indicators are given in the following matrix:

Risk level		
Low	Medium	High
<b>Structure, operations, processes and products</b>		
<b><i>i. size of management units (different size classes)</i></b>		
Risk: the ability to guide forest management by a professional forest manager in dependence on the area of managed property is directly proportional to the number of forest managers		
Forest area of participants does not exceed 10000 ha	Forest area of participants does not exceed 20000 ha	Forest area of participants exceeds 20 000 ha.
<b><i>ii. biogeographic of area (e.g. lowlands, middle mountains, alpine localities)</i></b>		
Risk: the use of correct and realistically available harvesting and transport technologies (level of transport accessibility of stands, technological preparation of workplaces, use of harvesting and transport technologies corresponds to the terrain conditions and subsoil)		
For more than 50% of the certified area, the slope of the terrain (slope accessibility) is up to 25%	For more than 50% of the certified area, the slope of the terrain (slope accessibility) is up to 50% or forest stands are on flysch areas	For more than 50% of the certified area, the slope of the terrain (slope accessibility) is over 50%
<b><i>iii. operations, processes and products of group participants</i></b>		
Risk: prevailing approach and procedures (concept) of SFM		

Close-to-nature forest management concept (use of ecological principles)	The principle of cost-effectiveness and economic efficiency (thorough fulfilment of planned tasks, preferably with a positive return and at the lowest cost)	Prioritizing an entrepreneurial approach (profit maximization)
<b>Deforestation and forest conversion</b>		
<p>Not applicable.</p> <p>Pursuant to Act 326/2005 on Forests, forest land may be used for purposes other than the performance of forest functions only if the competent body of the state forestry administration decides on their temporary exclusion or permanent exclusion from forest functions or on restricting the use of forest functions. Exemption or restriction of use may only take place where necessary and justified, in particular where the role of social and economic development cannot be ensured otherwise. Forest conversions are prohibited by law.</p>		
<b>Rotation period</b>		
<p>Not applicable.</p> <p>Rotation period is forest management and planning quantity objectively determined in accordance with the Decree 453/2006 Coll. on Forest Management and Forest Protection in management models for homogeneous population of forest types. It is not up to the owner to decide on the start of the regeneration (cutting age) and on the period in which the regeneration should be completed (rotation period).</p>		
<b>Richness of biological diversity</b>		
<p>Risk: the established network of protected areas (3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> degree of nature protection) and the degree of restrictions eliminate the application of the principles of common management and the use of the SFM potential for the preservation or restoration of favourable condition and protection of natural habitats</p>		
The area of protected areas does not exceed 30% of the certified area	The area of protected areas is in the range of 30% - 70% of the certified area	The area of protected areas exceeds 70% of the certified area
<b>Recreation and other socio-economic functions of the forests</b>		
<p>Risk: the use of forests by the public for recreation, rest, regeneration and the provision of other socio-economic services is accessible to all citizens, affects the forest environment, rights and legitimate interests of the forest owner/manager and certification participants</p>		
When staying in the forest, the public uses the built facilities and does not disturb the forest environment	The public moves freely through the forests according to the instructions and guidelines of the owner; it affects the forest environment	When staying in the forest, the public does not respect the protection of forests, instructions and guidelines of the owner
<b>Dependence of and interaction with local communities</b>		
<p>Risk: forestry works affecting the quality of life of the local population and the interests of local communities and NGOs</p>		
Forestry works affecting the quality of life are carried out in accordance with the requirements of local communities, local population, affected stakeholder groups and	Forestry works affecting the quality of life are carried out after the announcement of their start and do not have a significant negative impact on the quality of living and working conditions of local	Forestry works affecting the quality of life are carried out without the announcement of their start and have a significant negative impact on the quality of living and working conditions of local

NGOs operating in the certified area	population, affected stakeholder groups and NGOs operating in the certified area	population, affected stakeholder groups and NGOs operating in the certified area
<b>Available resources for administration, operations, training and research</b>		
Risk: lack of available resources threatens the level of SFM		
Revenues from the SFM production are appropriate to the SFM needs	Revenues from the SFM production are insufficient to support training and research activities	Revenues from the SFM production are insufficient to create appropriate organizational structure and resources needed for SFM
<b>Forest governance and law enforcement in the country or region of the client's organisation</b>		
<b><i>i. forest ownership type (state, community, municipal, private)</i></b>		
Risk: relation to the property, degree of involvement of the owner and control mechanisms on the organization and management of SFM		
More than 50% of participants directly ensure management (community forests, private, internal control is performed continuously by all owners)	More than 50% of the participants ensure the management through the governance organization of the forest owner (state, community, private forests, internal control is performed by supervisory bodies according to the decision of the management)	
<b><i>ii. governance and law enforcement</i></b>		
Risk: restriction of common management and compensation for restrictions of common management		
	Extension of the period of approval procedures on the conditions of common management by stakeholder groups and state authorities	Late or insufficient financial compensation for management restrictions

9.1.3.5 Integrated risk categories shall be determined on the basis of the proportion of the risk level of the indicators from the risk precondition matrix:

<b>Integrated risk categories</b>	<b>Proportion of the risk level of indicators</b>		
	<b>Low</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>High</b>
Low	More than 60%*		Less than 10%
Medium	Less than 60%		Less than 30%
High	Less than 10%	Less than 40%	

\* / - rounded up to the nearest whole number

*Note:* All conditions must apply simultaneously to determine the integrated risk category

9.1.3.6 Deviations in audit frequency and intensity for low or high risk shall be determined on the basis of integrated risk categories as follows:

- in the case of low risk: by a coefficient of 0.8
- in the case of high risk: by a coefficient of 1,2

*Note:* Additional indicators for risk assessment of multi-site certification organizations (group forest certification) are defined in Annex 3 of this document.

#### **9.1.4 Determining audit time**

9.1.4.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.1.4 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.1.4.2 Procedures for determining and calculating audit time shall be based on objective criteria that are transparent and justifiable.

9.1.4.3 Procedures for determining and calculating audit time shall cover at least the following criteria:

- a) the risk indicators as defined in 9.1.3.3, including taking into account the level of risk
- b) the results of any prior audits, including those of management systems of participants in group certification,
- c) number of forest owners/managers considerations and the resulting facts,
- d) quality and level of confidence of the internal monitoring and audit programme.

9.1.4.4 The certification body shall implement these procedures in its certification programme.

9.1.4.5 The certification body shall determine the time needed to plan and accomplish a complete and effective audit for each group organisation.

*Note:* Requirements for determining audit time of multi-site certification organisations (group forest certification) are defined in Annex 3 of this standard.

#### **9.1.5 Multi-site sampling**

All the requirements given in clause 9.1.5 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

*Note:* Requirements for evaluation of multi-site certification organisations (group forest certification) are defined in Annex 3 of this standard.

#### **9.1.6 Multiple management system standard**

All the requirements given in clause 9.1.6 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

## **9.2 Planning audits**

### **9.2.1 Determining audit objectives, scope and criteria**

9.2.1.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.2.1 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.2.1.2 The audit scope determined by the certification body shall describe the extent and boundaries of the audit, such as sites, organizational units, activities and processes to be audited.

9.2.1.3 The certification body shall plan the tools and technologies which will be used to gather evidence. It shall be clearly defined for which purpose the tools and technologies are used and which requirements are covered, if applicable.

9.2.1.4 The certification body when defining the scope shall consider the following criteria:

- a) Representation: the client's operations and processes shall be randomly but representatively considered.
- b) Protection: areas with high impact on the archived objectives of the management system shall be considered.
- c) Correction: difficult and areas with previously identified nonconformities shall be considered.
- d) Prevention: The client organisation shall not be able to fully predict the chosen areas.

### **9.2.2 Audit team selection and assignment**

9.2.2.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.2.2 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.2.2.2 The certification body shall have documented procedures for selecting and appointing the audit team, including audit team leader.

9.2.2.3 Team of auditors shall have relevant competence and knowledge in the area of forestry, nature and landscape protection as well as protection of the environment. The team of auditors can be supplemented by technical experts whose role is advisory. Qualification criteria for auditors conducting assessment within the Slovak Forest Certification System are defined in chapter 7.2 of this document.

9.2.2.4 The applicant shall be informed about the composition of team of auditors and have sufficient time to object to the appointment of any particular auditor or expert.

### **9.2.3 Audit plan**

9.2.3.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.2.3 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.2.3.2 The certification body shall have documented procedures to ensure that an audit plan is established for each audit to provide basis for agreement regarding the conduct and scheduling of the audit activities.

9.2.3.3 Time schedule of assessment, audit programme and plans shall be submitted to the group applicant for certification and the audit team. The group applicant reviews and approves the plan.

9.2.3.4 In case the group applicant does not agree with particular steps proposed in the assessment schedule the complaints shall be communicated to the audit team leader. The complaints shall be resolved before the assessment itself takes place in the common

participation of the audit team leader, group applicant, and national governing body of the Slovak Forest Certification System, if needed.

### **9.3 Initial certification**

#### **9.3.1 Initial certification audit**

##### **9.3.1.1 General**

All the requirements given in clause 9.3.1.1 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

##### **9.3.1.2 Stage 1**

9.3.1.2.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.3.1.2 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.3.1.2.2 The stage 1 audit has the function of a “readiness review”. The scope of this audit shall comprise:

- a) to confirm scope and objective of the certification audit
- b) to audit the group applicant documentation
- c) to evaluate forest management area specific conditions
- d) to evaluate procedures for internal audits and management system integrity and the effectiveness of their implementation
- e) to determine the conformity of the client organisation with the PEFC trademarks usage rules and its effective implementation
- f) to finalize the audit plan for stage 2

##### **9.3.1.3 Stage 2**

9.3.1.3.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.3.1.3 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.3.1.3.2 The stage 2 audit shall take place at the site of the applicant and selected forest owners/managers and consist of the following phases:

- a) introductory meeting
- b) gathering information and evidence about conformity to the requirements
- c) analysis of all information and evidence of the stage 1 and 2 audit, including appropriate consultations with stakeholders
- d) revision of findings and agreement with the respective managers in the sample on conclusions of individual audits
- e) concluding meeting with the group applicant, presentation of audit results so that the group applicant and respective forest owners and managers can ask about the identified nonconformities and their justification
- f) elaboration of audit reports, comments on the nonconformities, introduction of adopted corrective actions, agreement on information provided to the applicant to the certification body, and submission of the report to the certification body
- g) submitting the audit report to the applicant, including information about the need of an additional full audit or additional limited audit, or documented evidence in order to verify effective correction and corrective actions
- h) verification of effective correction of nonconformities
- i) providing information for granting initial certification to the certification body together with a recommendation whether or not to grant certification



### **9.3.2 Initial certification audit conclusions**

All the requirements given in clause 9.3.2 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

## **9.4 Conducting audits**

### **9.4.1 General**

All the requirements given in clause 9.4.1 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **9.4.2 Conducting the opening meeting**

All the requirements given in clause 9.4.2 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **9.4.3 Communication during the audit**

All the requirements given in clause 9.4.3 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **9.4.4 Obtaining and verifying information**

All the requirements given in clause 9.4.4 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **9.4.5 Identifying and recording audit findings**

9.4.5.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.4.5 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.4.5.2 Audit findings shall be classified as major nonconformities, minor nonconformities and observations.

### **9.4.6 Preparing audit conclusions**

All the requirements given in clause 9.4.6 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **9.4.7 Conducting the closing meeting**

All the requirements given in clause 9.4.7 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **9.4.8 Audit report**

9.4.8.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.4.8 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.4.8.2 The reports of initial, surveillance and recertification audits shall:

- a) include the rationale for the application of the criteria to address the risk in the audit planning (9.2.1.4)
- b) be sufficient for the certification body's decision on certification
- c) allow for traceability of the objective evidence upon which the evaluation was based to establish conformance or nonconformance with the requirements of the forest management standard
- d) support the conclusions reached by the audit team

9.4.8.3 Additionally, the report shall contain a summary of the certified forest area and the audit results (summary report) which shall be made available to the public by the group applicant.

9.4.8.4 The certification body shall submit the audit report to the group applicant within one month after its approval by the certification body.

#### **9.4.9 Cause analysis of nonconformities**

All the requirements given in clause 9.4.9 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

#### **9.4.10 Effectiveness of corrections and corrective actions**

9.4.10.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.4.10 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.4.10.2 Major and minor nonconformities identified in audits shall result in corrective actions by the respective forest owners/manager and the group applicant resolving the nonconformities. The corrective action plan, including a timeframe shall be reviewed and accepted by the certification body. The time period for completion of the corrective actions for major nonconformities identified in audits and their verification by the certification body shall follow the rules of the certification body but not exceed 3 months. Corrective actions for minor nonconformities shall be verified no later than during the next audit.

9.4.10.3 If specific natural conditions do not allow the implementation of corrective actions within the defined timeframes the certification body can give an exemption. The justification shall be documented.

9.4.10.4 Corrective actions for all nonconformities identified in audits shall be verified by the certification body by site visit or other appropriate forms of verification.

9.4.10.5 The audit evidence to determine the conformity with the forest management standard shall include relevant information from stakeholders (e.g. government agencies, community groups, conservations organizations, etc.) as appropriate.

### **9.5 Certification decision**

#### **9.5.1 General**

All the requirements given in clause 9.5.1 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

#### **9.5.2 Actions prior to making a decision**

All the requirements given in clause 9.5.2 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

#### **9.5.3 Information for granting initial certification**

9.5.3.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.5.3 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.5.3.2 On the basis of information acquired during evaluation, the certification body shall make the certification decision on whether the management system conforms to the SFCS requirements.

9.5.3.3 Nonconformities with certification requirements (criteria and indicators) are classified as minor and major. Minor nonconformities (mistakes and less significant and occasional nonconformities) do not represent an obstacle for the certificate issuance. Major nonconformities are the reason for non-granting the certificate or for audit interruption. Corrective measures shall be adopted for all identified nonconformities with the SFCS requirements

9.5.3.4 On the basis of positive decision of the certification body, the applicant for group certification shall receive a certificate confirming conformity of forest management of the respective group with the SFCS requirements.

#### **9.5.4 Information for granting recertification**

All the requirements given in clause 9.5.4 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

## **9.6 Maintaining certification**

### **9.6.1 General**

All the requirements given in clause 9.6.1 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

### **9.6.2 Surveillance activities**

9.6.2.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.6.2 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.6.2.2 The surveillance activities shall consider the risk assessment carried out by the certification body.

9.6.2.3 The certification body shall conduct periodical surveillance to verify whether forest management system of the respective group complies with the SFCS requirements. The surveillance activities shall be carried out according to the procedures defined in chapter 9.3.1.3 of this document. Surveillance covers a review of progress of planned activities and the control of PEFC trademarks usage.

9.6.2.4 Surveillance audits shall be conducted during the certificate validity, though the period between surveillance audits shall not exceed 12 months. The date of the first surveillance audit following initial certification shall not be more than 12 months from the last day of the stage 2 audit. The documentation for regular supervision is provided to the certification body by the group applicant or an authorized organization, which performed an internal management audit.

### **9.6.3 Recertification**

9.6.3.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.6.3 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.6.3.2 The certification body shall conduct recertification audit no later than 5 years from the initial certification. Recertification audit can be conducted in a reduced extend compared to the initial certification audit and it shall be mainly aimed at weaker areas of the system identified during certification and surveillance audits. The range of recertification audit shall comply minimally with the requirements for surveillance defined in chapter 9.6.2 of this document.

### **9.6.4 Special audits**

9.6.4.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.6.4 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.6.4.2 Special audits include audits for extensions to the scope of certification already granted and short-notice audits.

#### **9.6.4.2.1 Expanding scope**

9.6.4.2.1.1 The certification body shall, in response to an application for extension to the scope of a certification already granted, undertake a review of the application and determine any audit activities necessary to decide whether or not the extension may be granted. This may be conducted in conjunction with a surveillance audit.

9.6.4.2.1.2 The certification body shall undertake a review in case that forest area of forest owners/managers participating in the group certification increases by more than 25%.

#### **9.6.4.2.2 Short-notice audits**

9.6.4.2.2.1 It may be necessary for the certification body to conduct audits of certified group applicants at short notice to investigate complaints, or in response to changes, or as follow up on suspended group applicants.

9.6.4.2.2.2 In such cases the certification body shall

- a) describe and make known in advance to the certified group applicants the conditions under which these short notice visits are to be conducted
- b) exercise additional care in the assignment of the audit team because of the lack of opportunity for the group applicant to object to audit team members

### **9.6.5 Suspending, withdrawing or reducing the scope of certification**

9.6.5.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.6.5 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.6.5.2 The certification body shall advise immediately the PEFC national governing body in writing if certification is suspended or withdrawn, or where there are any changes in decisions relating to the status of certification of the group applicant, and the reasons for those decisions.

## **9.7 Appeals**

9.7.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.7 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.7.2 The certification body's appeals process should have clear deadlines.

## **9.8 Complaints**

9.8.1 All the requirements given in clause 9.8 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

9.8.2 The certification body's complaints process shall have clear deadlines and these shall be communicated to the complainant.

9.8.3 The certification body shall provide at least once a year an overview about the received complaints to the PEFC national governing body. This overview covers at least:

- a) certificate number
- b) description
- c) requirement not complied with
- d) evidence
- e) result

9.8.4 The certification body shall provide the overview not later than end of January for the previous year.

## **9.9 Client records**

All the requirements given in clause 9.9 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

# **10 Management system requirements for certification bodies**

All the requirements given in clause 10 of ISO/IEC 17021-1 apply.

## **Annex 1 (normative): PEFC notification of certification bodies**

### **(Requirements are additional to the accreditation of the certification body)**

The certification body operating the PEFC recognised forest management certification against the Slovak Forest Certification System shall be notified by the PEFC national governing body in the Slovak Republic.

The PEFC notification requires that the certification body shall have a valid accreditation recognised by the PEFC Council (see Annex 2 of this document). The certification body shall provide the PEFC national governing body with information on granted certifications as specified by the SFCS requirements.

The PEFC notification may require the certification body to pay a PEFC notification fee as specified by the PEFC national governing body.

In order to ensure the independence of a certification body the PEFC notification conditions implemented by the PEFC national governing bodies shall only cover:

- a) administrative conditions (e.g. communication of the certification body with the PEFC national governing bodies, transfer of information, etc.),
- b) financial conditions (fees imposed on certified entities),
- c) compliance with requirements for certification bodies verified through accreditation as described in this document.

The PEFC notification conditions shall not discriminate against certification bodies or create trade obstacles.

## **Annex 2 (normative): Accreditations accepted by the PEFC Council**

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 of IAF or IAF's Regional Accreditation Groups with IAF MLA such as European co-operation for Accreditation (EA), Interamerican Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC), Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC)). 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 and/or with reference to any future changes and amendments adopted by the PEFC Council and presented at the PEFC Council official website [www.pefc.org](http://www.pefc.org).

The scope of accreditation shall also explicitly state ISO/IEC 17021-1, this document and other requirements against which the certification body has been assessed.

## **Annex 3 (normative): Group forest management certification**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This annex is for the audit and certification of forest management in the group to ensure that the audit provides adequate confidence in the conformity of the forest management in the group with the forest management standard across all participants in group certification and that the audit is both practical and feasible in both economic and operative terms.

### **2 Eligibility criteria for the applicant**

- 2.1 Eligibility criteria for the applicant are defined in the technical document TD SFCS 1002:2021 *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements*.
- 2.2 In addition to general eligibility criteria the technical document TD SFCS 1002:2021 *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements* contains requirements concerning functions and responsibilities of the applicant and the participants in group certification.

### **3 Eligibility criteria for the certification body**

#### **3.1 General**

- 3.1.1 The certification body shall provide information to the applicant about the eligibility criteria laid down herein before starting the evaluation process and shall not proceed with the evaluation if any of the eligibility criteria for the group certification are not met.
- 3.1.2 Before starting the evaluation process, the certification body shall inform the group applicant that the certificate will not be issued if during the audit nonconformities in relation to these eligibility criteria are found.

#### **3.2 Application review**

- 3.2.1 The certification body's procedures shall ensure that the initial contract review identifies the complexity and scale of the activities covered by the forest management scheme subject to certification and any differences between participants in certification as the basis for determining the level of sampling.
- 3.2.2 The certification body shall undertake a risk assessment for the group organisation considering the aspects defined in 9.2.1. The results from the risk assessment determine the scope and audit procedures for the group certification audit.
- 3.2.3 The certification body shall identify the group applicant that is its contractual partner for the performance of the certification. The agreement shall allow the certification body to carry out the certification activities at all participants in group certification.

#### **3.3 Audit**

- 3.3.1 The certification body shall have documented procedures to deal with audits under its group certification procedure. Such audit procedures, including documentation and records review, on-site audits, etc., shall establish the way the certification body satisfies itself, inter alia, that the forest management requirements are actually applied to all participants in group certification and that all the criteria in the forest management standard are met.

- 3.3.2 If more than one audit team is involved in the evaluation/surveillance of the network, the certification body shall designate a unique audit leader whose responsibility is to consolidate the findings from all the audit teams and to produce a synthesis report.
- 3.3.3 The risk assessment shall consider at least the following additional risk indicators:
- a) the number of participants of a group
  - b) the size structure of the participants of a group
  - c) the variation of the risk indicators defined in 9.1.3.3. over the participants of a group.
  - d) the participation of forest cooperatives in a group

### **3.4 Audit times**

- 3.4.1 The certification body shall be able to demonstrate its justification for the time spent on group certification audits in terms of its overall policy for allocation of audit time.
- 3.4.2 The minimum audit time to spend for each individual participant in group certification as a part of the initial, surveillance and re-certification audits is the same as for the initial audit defined according to the procedure required in in clause 9.
- 3.4.3 Reductions can be applied to take into account the clauses of the forest management and group certification standard that are not relevant to participants and are only examined at the group applicant.
- 3.4.4 No reduction is permitted for the group applicant.

### **3.5 Identifying and recording audit findings**

- 3.5.1 When nonconformities are found at any individual participant of group certification, either through the applicant's internal auditing or from auditing by the certification body, an investigation shall take place to determine whether the other participants in group certification may be affected. Therefore, the certification body shall require the group applicant to review the nonconformities to determine whether they indicate an overall forest management deficiency applicable to all participants in group certification or not. If they are found to do so, corrective action should be performed both at the group applicant and at the individual forest owners/managers. If they are found not to do so, the group applicant shall be able to demonstrate to the certification body the justification for limiting its follow-up action.
- 3.5.2 The certification body shall require evidence of these actions and increase its sampling frequency until it is satisfied that control is re-established.
- 3.5.3 If the nonconformities indicate an overall forest management deficiency applicable to the overall function of the group certification shall be denied to the whole group pending satisfactory corrective action.
- 3.5.4 It shall not be admissible that, in order to overcome the obstacle raised by the existence of a nonconformity at a single forest owner/manager, the group applicant seeks to exclude from the scope the "problematic" forest owner/manager during the certification process.

### **3.6 Certificates**

- 3.6.1 One single certificate shall be issued with the name and address of the central office of the group applicant. A list of all the participants in group certification to that the certificate relates shall be issued as documented information. The scope or other reference on the certificate shall make clear that the certified activities are performed by the network of participants in group certification in the list.
- 3.6.2 A sub-certificate may be issued to the organization for each forest owner/manager covered by the certification on condition that it contains the same scope, or a sub-scope of that scope, and includes a clear reference to the main certificate.



- 3.6.3 The certificate will be withdrawn in its entirety, if the applicant or a forest owner/manager does not fulfil the necessary criteria for the maintaining of the certificate.
- 3.6.4 A list of all forest owners/managers, including their contact details, identification of their forest property and their size, shall be kept updated by the group applicant.

## **4 Selection of participants in the audit programme**

### **4.1 General**

- 4.1.1 The requirements for the selection of participants in the audit programme include the following procedures for
- a) determination of sample categories
  - b) determination of the sample size
  - c) selection of the participants

### **4.2 Determination of sample categories**

- 4.2.1 The principle of the sampling is based on the establishment of different sample categories. A sampling between the categories shall not be possible. A sampling within the categories is possible.
- 4.2.2 The sample categories shall be established based on structural indicators.
- 4.2.3 Structural indicators are:
- a) forest ownership type (e.g. state, community, municipal, private)
  - b) size of management units (different size classes)
  - c) biogeographic of area (e.g. lowlands, middle mountains, alpine localities)
- 4.2.4 Additionally, other indicators of risk assessment defined in 9.1.3.3. can be used.

### **4.3 Determination of the sample size**

- 4.3.1 The sample size shall be calculated separately for each sample category.
- 4.3.2 The size of the sample generally should be the square root of the number of participants: ( $y=\sqrt{x}$ ), rounded to the upper whole number.
- 4.3.3 The size of the sample can be adapted taking into account one or more of the following indicators:
- a) results of a risk assessment carried out according to 9.1.3.3. In this case, the risk category is determined for each form of ownership, whereby the number of participants in the sample is divided into a risk category in a ratio of 3: 2: 1 in favour of the highest risk category, taking into account the number of certification participants within the category:
    - in the case of low risk: by a coefficient of 0.7
    - in the case of high risk: by a coefficient of 1.2
  - b) results of internal audits or previous certification audits
    - in the case of non-conformity at the group level (10.1.c): by a coefficient of 2
  - c) quality/level of confidence of the internal monitoring programme

- in the case of reliably identified favourable results of the internal monitoring program (9.1.1): by a coefficient of 0.7
- d) use of technologies allowing the gathering of information concerning specified requirements
  - in the case of reliably gathered information with the use of given technologies: by a coefficient of 0.7

*Note:* Such technologies can be e.g. the use of satellite data or drones which allow compliance statements for specific requirements of a sustainability standard.

- e) based on other means of gathering information about activities on the ground
  - in the case of substantiated concerns by the stakeholders concerned and citizens: by a coefficient of 1.2
  - in the case of provision of reliable information (self-assessment) by participants confirmed by the state authorities: by a coefficient of 0.7

*Note:* Such a mean can be a survey with participants who provide some information about their activities on the ground.

#### **4.4 Selection of the participants**

- 4.4.1 The sample should be partly selective based on the factors set out below and partly non selective, and should result in a range of different forest owners/managers being selected, without excluding the random element of sampling.
- 4.4.2 At least 25% of the sample should be selected at random.
- 4.4.3 Taking into account the criteria mentioned hereafter, the remainder of the sample should be selected so that the differences among the forest owners/managers selected over the period of validity of the certificate is as large as possible.
- 4.4.4 The selection criteria for forest owners/managers, besides the basic criteria described in 4.2.3 shall consider the following aspects:
  - a) results of internal audits or previous certification audits
  - b) records of complaints and other relevant aspects of corrective and preventive action
  - c) significant variations in production processes of the participants in group certification
  - d) modifications since the last certification audit
  - e) geographical dispersion
- 4.4.5 Depending on the specific situation the certification body should implement a procedure for taking a sub-sample in local associations.
- 4.4.6 This selection does not have to be done at the start of the evaluation process. It can also be done once the audit at the group applicant has been completed. In any case, the group applicant shall be informed of the forest owners/managers to be part of the sample. This can be on relatively short notice, however, should allow adequate time for preparation for the audit.
- 4.4.7 The group applicant shall be examined during every initial, surveillance and re-certification audit.
- 4.4.8 The certification body shall implement this procedure for determining the sampling for on-site audits in its certification programme.