

**GUIDANCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND
RECOGNITION OF CERTIFICATION SCHEMES FOR
PERSONS CONFORMITY WITH
ELOT EN ISO/IEC 17024 REQUIREMENTS**

Hellenic Accreditation System

ESYD G-SCHEMPERS

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Hellenic Accreditation System

Table of contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Scope.....	4
3. Definitions	5
4. Development, recognition and maintenance of a certification scheme for persons	6
4.1 Development of a certification scheme for persons.....	6
4.2 Submission of a certification scheme for recognition.....	7
4.3 Basic elements of the scheme and of the certification process for persons	8
5. Guidance implementation	9
6. Annexes.....	10
Annex 1: Typical contents of code of conduct.....	10
Annex 2: Typical questions for the correct development of a certification scheme.....	10
Annex 3: Scheme owner	11
7. References	11

1. Introduction

Bodies operating certification of persons or PCBs carry out audits in order to verify a person's compliance with specific and documented requirements, specifications and procedures. The context of the above three elements is briefly called certification scheme for persons.

The certification of persons provides assurance that the certified person meets the requirements of the certification scheme for persons, according to which certification was granted. If the certification is provided under the status of accreditation, i.e. by a PCB accredited for this scheme, then this certification is notably reliable, systematic and validated, since the PCB complies in a documented manner with a number of requirements, concerning the quality of its services. These requirements are defined by the International accreditation standard ELOT EN ISO/IEC 17024.

It should be noted that the accredited certification of persons should not be applied uncritically to any situation that requires verification of a person's competence. If it is to be decided whether a person certification (for a specific scope) should be accredited, a number of parameters should be considered, such as what is the impact of the specific scope on health and safety and environmental protection or what are the requirements of national and/or international markets relevant to the technological changes, to the person's competences and expertise, what are the expectations for impartiality, avoiding conflicts of interest, confidentiality, etc.

From such a multilevel examination, very useful conclusions may come out about whether the determination of a person's competence should be subject to a mechanism of accredited certification of persons or to the granting of a form of attestation, approval, license, etc. By default, a PCB's and the corresponding scheme's compliance with the requirements of ELOT EN ISO/IEC 17024 offers an added value to the provided services and recognition in national and/or international level.

2. Scope

This guidance is supplementary to the application of ELOT EN ISO/IEC 17024, intended for use by any interested party, regarding the way of development, validation and maintenance of a certification scheme for persons, which will be incorporated in an accredited environment. Initially, the compliance with this guidance should be examined by ESYD during the review of the application for scheme recognition, and where necessary during the assessment in the premises. It should be noted that the certification of persons applies only in combination with specific certification schemes.

Hellenic Accreditation System

This guidance aims at clarifying concepts, giving directions and assisting in the best possible application of ELOT EN ISO/IEC 17024, in a national level, in the view of the ongoing development of technical professions and the international trends to verify the competence of professionals. This is the Second Edition and it was issued after the revision of ELOT EN ISO/IEC 17024: 2003.

3. Definitions

Some helpful definitions are presented below, so that basic concepts are understood and common terminology is used hereafter, in full accordance with ELOT EN ISO/IEC 17024.

Candidate: the person who has fulfilled specific prerequisites (this is the difference between a candidate and an applicant), which allows him to be admitted to the certification process.

Certification process: activities by which a certification body determines that a person fulfils specific competence requirements, including application, assessment, decision on certification, surveillance and recertification as well as use of certificates and logos/marks.

Certification scheme for persons:

Competence and other requirements, related to specific categories of professionals and specialized persons, for whom the same procedures, standards and regulations apply.

Competence:

Proven ability to apply knowledge and/or skills by the candidate to achieve intended results, as defined in the certification scheme.

Assessment:

A process that evaluates a person's fulfillment of the requirements of the certification scheme, leading to the certification decision.

Examination:

A mechanism that is part of the assessment which measures a candidate's competence by one or more means, such as written, oral, practical and observational, as defined in the certification scheme.

Examiner:

A person with specialized technical and personal skills and professional judgment, competent to conduct and / or score an examination.

Qualification:

Demonstrated characteristics of education, training and work experience (applicable for PCB personnel).

Hellenic Accreditation System

Interested Parties Committee:

A group consisting of groups or organizations representatives, affected by the performance of a certified person or the PCB activity.

The Committee should fairly and objectively represent the interests of all parties that are related, involved or benefit from the existence of the scheme, without predominance of particular interest.

An interested party may be considered a public authority, a chamber, a professional association, industry representatives-employers, organizations for the public protection / consumers association, an academic Union, a Research Institute, certified professionals etc, having primary and direct interest in the efficient operation and achievement of the purposes of the certification scheme.

Scheme owner:

Standardization body, public authority, organization, chamber or professional association etc, responsible for the development and maintenance of the scheme (i.e. address, manage and benefit directly from its operation), which is provided to appropriate PCBs. A scheme owner may be a PCB itself.

End user:

Person (s) that, in order to make a decision, is (are) based on the information provided by the certificate held by the certified person or make (s) use of his proven competence. Specifically, the end user may be himself client of the certified person or an employer, based on the certification of the competence of a professional, in order to hire / cooperate with him or assign to him a specific task.

Recognition of a certification scheme for persons:

Scheme approval by ESYD, so that it can subsequently be implemented by accredited PCBs or PCBs in the process of being accredited, to which the owner hands it over. In case that the owner is a PCB, the recognition takes place with the accreditation of the PCB for the specific scheme.

4. Development, recognition and maintenance of a certification scheme for persons

4.1 Development of a certification scheme for persons

In order that a scheme owner develops a certification scheme for persons for recognition (so that the PCBs, which will implement it, may be accredited), a study should be submitted to ESYD, which will document that:

1. The intention to develop the scheme arises from a documented need of the market (requests from professional associations, unions, chambers, etc).
2. The need to develop the scheme is accepted by end-users collective bodies (consumers, employers, etc).

Hellenic Accreditation System

3. National priorities and/or relevant legislative requirements and/or national, European, International standards, have been identified.
 4. Purpose of the scheme is the development, improvement and recognition of the relative profession, creating a sense of confidence in the market, as well as the overall common good.
 5. The existence of the same or a similar scheme has been checked in the national and international market. In case that the scheme has the same or equivalent form and operates under a PCB accredited according to ELOT EN ISO/IEC 17024, there should be a correlation reference.
 6. The interested parties have been identified.
 7. If the scheme is not developed by a PCB, the relevant points of annex 3 must be answered.
- ESYD, after reviewing this study, will decide on the possibility of initial recognition of the scheme.

4.2 Submission of a certification scheme for recognition

If there is a positive ESYD decision for the development of the scheme by the owner (possibility of initial recognition of the scheme), the owner should submit the appropriate documentation regarding the following, in order for the scheme to be recognized (see also annex 2). The owner should also submit an application for accreditation, in case that the owner is a PCB.

1. Members of the Interested Parties Committee and how they are delegated
2. The name and scope of the scheme
3. The group of persons/professionals that the scheme aims at (target group)
4. Detailed job and task description of the scheme
5. The required competence of the certified person, possible certification gradations-levels and the syllabus that correspond to the previous description
6. Physical or/and mental attributes of the candidate and the mechanisms of their assessment
7. Prerequisites for certification (e.g. training program, level of education, physical capabilities, etc)
8. Required code of conduct (annex 1)
9. The criteria for initial certification, maintenance of certification, recertification (e.g. the duration of the examination, the examination score and the pass/fail score, general rules, etc)
10. Assessment methods for initial certification, maintenance of certification, recertification of the candidate (i.e., examinations, theoretical and/or practical), which may include possible specificities of candidate assessment (special knowledge in reading, writing, language and arithmetic, etc)
11. The criteria for suspending and withdrawing certification
12. The criteria for changing the scope/level of certification
13. The experts involved in the development and maintenance of the scheme

Hellenic Accreditation System

14. The requirements related to the assessment of the competence of the certified person (technical standards, legislative requirements, etc.)

Consequently, ESYD will assess the compliance of the scheme and/or the PCB with the requirements of this Guidance and/or the accreditation standard.

4.3 Basic elements of the scheme and of the certification process for persons

Attention should also be given to the following:

1. Implementation and proper documentation of those described in paragraph 8.4 of the standard. E.g. the owner must initially and periodically address issues regarding the identification and alignment of prerequisites and automated or not examination systems mechanisms, the need for equipment-premises, the duration of certification, the surveillance mechanisms of certified persons, the validation of the assessment process etc.
2. The scheme validation, i.e. the pilot application, on condition that evidence is produced that the scheme works with objectivity, validity and reliability, as well as in absolute agreement with its development rationale, market requirements, relevant standards and legislation. The owner or the PCB must demonstrate to ESYD that the scheme was based on mechanisms, such as, interviews with specialized professionals, questionnaires submitted to the target group, professional standards, practices, etc. Moreover, the scheme must be accompanied by records of comments and corrections, as well as the final documented acceptance by the Interested Parties Committee.
3. When the scheme includes specific qualifications as prerequisites for a candidate, such as knowledge level, physical capability level, participation in a training program, etc, these must be clear, documented and publicly available in the frame that certification shall not be restricted on the grounds of any limiting conditions. Successful completion of an approved training program may be a prerequisite of a certification scheme, but the recognition / approval of a training program shall not compromise impartiality or reduce the assessment and certification requirements.
4. All certification requirements must be understood, applicable, and adapted to the target group of the scheme.
5. To determine the compliance of a candidate with certification requirements, there must be at least one type of examination, during which evidence is collected, in order to measure a candidate's competence and lead to an impartial judgment. These could be simulation or real time tests, written exams, group or individual tasks, role-playing techniques (RP), etc.
6. Examination systems must be based on three main principles, during both their development and maintenance:
 - A) Validity. In order to be valid, examinations must assess these and only these that the scheme requires and collected evidence must

Hellenic Accreditation System

demonstrate that the criteria are fulfilled. A candidate's performance must cover a sufficient range of knowledge and skills (competence), related to the scope of certification. Examination conditions must simulate adequately actual working conditions.

B) Reliability. There must be a univocal correlation between interpretation / recognition of a candidate's produced evidence and examination result. Scoring techniques must be clear and predefined. The comparability of results of each single examination must be ensured, regardless of examination time, examination sites, examination content and examiners conducting the examination. At this point, examiners play an important role, specifically their competence, experience, knowledge, personal characteristics and level of skills.

C) Fairness. Examinations must not favor any candidate over others. There must be no conflicts of interest e.g. personal or professional relationships, financial or other pressures, etc.

7. The conditions of changing and/or enriching examination content / materials at regular intervals must be specified, in order to increase objectivity and confidentiality. The management of examination materials must be very careful by everyone involved in the examination.
8. When the parameters of the scheme are modified, then application to certified persons must be prescribed (time and other arrangements, as well as way of notifying certified persons on the changes).
9. The scheme must take into account legislation, regulations and technical standards, a good practice code, requirements of clients-market, environmental aspects, hygiene and safety at work, food safety etc.

5. Guidance Implementation

Any interest to develop a scheme, after the issuance date of the present guidance, must be accompanied by the submission of a study to ESYD in accordance with paragraph 4.1.

The PCBs that undertake to operate a recognized scheme of a specific owner must have the owner's consent, which must not be confused in any way with the assessment, carried out by the accreditation body¹. The criteria for the disposal of the scheme to the PCBs must be specific, defined by the owner and available to anyone, unless otherwise provided by legislation.

1 It must be noted that the owner's contribution to a PCB's accreditation for a specific scheme might consist only in providing expertise to the assessment team. Besides, any accreditation body within EA may cooperate (subcontract) only with another accreditation body, member of EA-MLA (EA policy).

The application for the recognition of a certification scheme for persons (and application for accreditation in the case of a PCB) (see paragraph 4.2) is submitted to ESYD by the applicant, along with an application fee payment

Hellenic Accreditation System

receipt (600 € plus VAT), for each scheme. For each submitted sub-scheme or gradation² an additional fee of 140 € plus VAT must be reimbursed. In cases where a visit is necessary at the applicant's premises (case of scheme owner) to collect evidence, then this will take place according to the current ESYD procedure for assessment visit and assessment fees.

*2 By the term sub-scheme, it is meant, for example, when there is an application for certification of persons carrying out NDTs with a) liquid penetrants and b) magnetic particles etc
By the term gradation, it is meant, for example, when there is an application for certification of persons carrying out NDTs with liquid penetrants at a) level 1 and b) level 2.*

6. Annexes

Annex 1: Typical contents of code of conduct

The certified person must

- a) Act professionally and ethically
- b) Seek for recognition, development and reputation of the profession.
- c) Undertake those tasks for which he/she is certified and/or not use certification in a task other than that defined by the certification scheme. Furthermore, he/she must not undertake tasks for which he/she does not have the competence.
- d) Inform and not conceal from his/her clients and/or his/her employer's clients, potential conflicts of interest.
- e) Not reveal any confidential information, unless otherwise provided by law or after agreement with any interested party.
- f) Be free from any kind of pressure (money, gifts, etc) from anyone who could affect his/her professional judgment.
- g) Ensure that his/her services are fair and professional, based on objective criteria.
- h) Not act in such a way that could affect or harm the reputation of the PCB or the certification process and cooperate in any investigation, when violation of code of conduct occurs.
- i) Retain a complete and reliable record of complaints or appeals, concerning service provision.

Annex 2: Typical questions for the correct development of a certification scheme

- Which is the scope of certification?
- How is the scope of certification described in the certificate and in the scheme?
- Which are the conditions for validity of certification?
- Which is the certification mark and what impact it has on the market?
- Which are the applicable standards or specifications, which fall within the requirements?

Hellenic Accreditation System

- How the fulfillment of examination requirements is documented?
- What legislative requirements exist and how they are fulfilled?
- How requirements and their implementation are made publicly available to the market?
- What is the rationale for developing the scheme?
- Who developed the scheme?
- What methods are used to ensure the declaration of compliance with the scheme requirements?
- Which method is used and how it was chosen, for monitoring compliance with scheme requirements (surveillance)?
- How they were formulated and which are the conditions for issuing, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending and withdrawing certification?
- What are the rights and obligations of a certified person and how they are communicated to him/her?
- What are the obligations of a PCB?
- What arrangements are made for collecting complaints for the work provided by a certified person?
- Where is the certification process described?
- How the examiners and the person responsible for certification decision are selected?
- How the personnel involved in the certification process is selected?
- Where are the records of certified persons maintained?

Annex 3: Scheme owner

Where a scheme owner is involved, the following information should be available:

- Who exactly is the owner,
- What is the owner's involvement with the scheme scope and what is the rationale of the scheme development,
- What is the owner's legal entity,
- What are the rules for cooperation with PCBs,
- If there is 'cooperation' of the owner with any accreditation body within EA

7. References

ELOT EN ISO/IEC 17024:2012 (Conformity assessment - General Requirements for Bodies operating Certification of Persons)

EA-1/22 A-AB:2006 (EA Policy For Conformity Assessment Schemes)

RvA-T33:2008 (Assessment of Conformity Assessment Schemes)

ELOT TS 1418:2004

MD 8181/831 (GG 653/B/16-5-05)