

GUTcert Audit and Certification Process

for

Quality Management Systems in accordance with DIN EN 9001

Environmental Management Systems in accordance with DIN EN 14001

Energy Management Systems in accordance with DIN EN 50001

Validation of Environmental Declarations in accordance with EMAS

Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems in accordance with DIN EN 45001

Ordinance on Waste Management Companies (EfbV)

Ordinance on Employment Promotion (AZAV)

Information Security Management Systems according to DIN ISO/IEC 27001 (including IT Security Catalogue)

Asset Management Systems in accordance with DIN ISO 55001

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1 Principles of GUTcert certification

Certification of an organisation begins with a two-stage initial audit and includes one surveillance audit in each of the following two years (or four surveillance audits in the case of AZAV certification cycles).

Recertification marks the start of a new certification cycle, which in turn includes annual surveillance audits in the following two or four years. These surveillance audits enable GUTcert to determine the extent to which the organisation and its management system have improved. Furthermore, the auditors work with the organisation to identify potential for improvement regarding the management system and system performance. Only auditors with a high level of technical and methodological expertise are deployed for this purpose. The audit team

- audits the management system and verifies compliance with the organisation's internal processes,
- determines whether the processes and procedures have been effectively introduced, implemented and maintained, and whether the objectives and specifications/requirements are being pursued, and
- verifies compliance with the normative requirements.

If the organisation operates at multiple sites, audits are also carried out at these sites during the certification cycle. Further information on the procedure and its requirements can be found in a separate information sheet (AA152EN_Instruction sheet_multi_site).

Special features of the GUTcert certification procedure:

- Organisations receive individual support in preparing for and carrying out the procedure; enquiries are responded to promptly.
- An organisation is regarded as a partner. The aim of the audits is to improve the organisation's business processes in a sustainable manner.
- Standards represent the collective expertise of specialists. GUTcert's auditors apply them only after considering the individual circumstances of each client.
- GUTcert staff possess a high level of skill and technical expertise to implement these principles.

The individual handling of quotations, the thorough preparation of auditors to make effective use of time during on-site audits, and the constant personal availability of auditors and staff at the certification body are key prerequisites for achieving these objectives.

Note: GUTcert is, amongst other things, an accredited certification body for the aforementioned systems, an environmental verification body for audits under EMAS, a technical surveillance authority for certifications under the EfbV, and competent body for the admission of providers and measures under the AZAV. However, in all further general GUTcert documents, the general term "certification body" is used for the sake of readability.

2 Requirements for certification

To obtain certification, the organisation must demonstrate that it has an established and effectively operated management system.

This includes, amongst other things,

- a completed internal audit covering the full scope of application,
- a completed management review to assess the effectiveness of the system, including the implementation and verification of corrective actions, and
- the organisation's independent operation of the management system.

The latter means that the organisation must have full authority over the design and implementation of the management system, including in particular

- the selection of personnel,
- the provision of resources, and
- the definition and implementation of management policy and the objectives derived therefrom.

For organisations that are part of a group or a corporate network and are seeking joint certification, further evidence is required (see also AA152).

3 Scope of certification

The scope of certification specifies the activities, products, services and sites for which the management system is officially certified. In justified cases, it may be narrower than the scope of application of the management system. The management system must, for this defined scope, include all activities, processes, persons and sites without which the provision of services that meet requirements and are reliable cannot be permanently ensured. It is not permissible to conceal weaknesses or a partially incomplete implementation by excluding relevant activities, processes, persons or sites.

Furthermore, the description of the scope must be unambiguous, clear and easily understandable even to non-experts. It must not give a false impression of what the organisation does.

4 Initial certification / recertification in accordance with AZAV

4.1 Preparation of the two-stage initial audit

Data collection

When an organisation contacts GUTcert, it is sent a form for the initial data collection with a request to provide some basic information. To speed up the process, this data collection may also be carried out by telephone or via the internet.

Preparation of a quotation

Based on the basic information, GUTcert prepares a quotation describing the scope of work and the conditions for certification/validation or approval. In addition, an initial draft of the audit programme is presented based on the data provided. The data collection takes into account the size of the organisation, the scope and complexity of the management system, the products and processes, the demonstrated level of effectiveness of the management system, and the results of previous audits.

In the organisation's best interests, every opportunity to reduce the audit duration is utilised, and remote audits (AA162 Remote Audits) are scheduled where appropriate.

If the organisation confirms the quotation or places an order on this basis, a preferred date for the audit may already be specified.

For all procedures in accordance with ISO 14001, ISO 9001, AZAV, ISO 50001, ISO/IEC 27001, ISO 55001 and ISO 45001 (DAkkS), GUTcert may review the quotation based on the stage 1 audit report and modify it if necessary.

Conclusion of contract and certification application

Once the order has been placed (certification contract), GUTcert compiles all relevant data (address details, additional sites, scope of application, contact persons, authorised representatives etc.) for the organisation into a formal certification application, which is then checked, amended if necessary, and returned to GUTcert by the organisation once signed. Should there be any relevant changes to the initial data collection, the audit programme and, if necessary, the audit scope will be adjusted retrospectively following consultation.

Application review

As part of the application review, GUTcert checks the submitted data for completeness and accuracy. This includes, amongst other things, checking the scope of application, the lists of sites, or the powers of intervention in relation to involved legal entities. The necessary supporting documents are requested. Without these documents, the application process cannot be completed, and no audits can be carried out.

Selection of auditors, technical experts and other parties involved

Following successful review of the certification application, GUTcert assembles an audit team. The client has the opportunity to cite reasons not to appoint a particular auditor. These reasons must be communicated to GUTcert immediately upon notification of the auditor's name. In such cases, GUTcert will assess whether the reasons given are sufficient to warrant a change of auditor and will inform the client of this decision. When appointing a replacement auditor, GUTcert will take particular care to address the reasons cited by the client.

To help the organisation prepare for the certification process, the GUTcert audit checklist is made available. The audit leader prepares a detailed audit schedule.

Auditors are appointed based on their technical expertise in the relevant sectors and are regularly trained on current issues relating to the relevant management systems and the content of international standards. Both auditors and assessors are subject to strict neutrality and, for this reason, may

not provide consultancy services to the organisation in question for a period of two years (four years in the case of EMAS) before and after certification. The term consultancy covers involvement in the establishment, implementation or maintenance of a management system. This also includes the conduct of internal audits. Training courses and seminars also fall under the term consultancy if company-specific solutions are offered. Auditors are obligated to maintain absolute confidentiality regarding the information obtained in the course of their work.

Furthermore, technical experts, interpreters and translators may be engaged to support the auditors with specific knowledge or expertise regarding the activity being audited, the language or the culture, thereby facilitating effective oral or written communication. These persons are subject to the supervision of the lead auditor and must be selected and deployed in such a way that they do not exert any undue influence on the audit.

4.2 Certification procedure / assessment

Certification audit

An initial certification audit is conducted in two stages:

Stage 1 audit

The stage 1 audit always includes a review of the management system documentation. The organisation is provided with a detailed list of the minimum documentation to be submitted.

The documentation review begins approximately six weeks before the intended audit date. By this point, the organisation's management documentation and approval of the auditors proposed by GUTcert should be available. The management system documentation normally comprises the management manual and the procedural instructions (for ISO/IEC 27001, additionally the Statement of Applicability (SoA); for ISO 55001, additionally the Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP)). Further documents such as work instructions or forms necessary for understanding the entire system should also be submitted (see also the detailed information on the GUTcert website).

The Stage 1 audit serves to assess the organisation's status and its understanding of the standard requirements. Any missing documents or those additionally required by the auditor will be requested.

In the case of a quality, environmental, occupational health and safety, asset or energy management system audit in accordance with DAkkS procedures, an on-site visit may take place as part of the stage 1 audit. This visit serves to gather additional information regarding the organisation's readiness for the stage 2 audit and the resources required for it. For procedures in accordance with ISO 50001 and ISO/IEC 27001, the stage 1 audit is generally always conducted on-site.

This on-site visit is mandatory if the organisation meets at least one of the following conditions:

- More than 500 employees
- High risk category in the areas of environment and/or occupational health (ISO 14001, ISO 45001)

Key elements of the audit are:

- Assessment of the maturity of management processes; in particular, the planning and the successful completion of the internal audit and the management review must be ensured by the time of the stage 2 audit
- Assessment of the organisation's core processes to evaluate the successful implementation of the management system; in the case of multi-site sampling certification procedures, an additional site of the organisation may need to be included
- Identification of the scope of application of the certification, particularly regarding sites, activities and scopes
- For ISO/IEC 27001: Clarification as to whether any existing documents that the auditor is not permitted to review may hinder or prevent further proceedings
- For ISO 55001: Clarification as to the extent to which the asset portfolio of the asset management system is accurately and completely mapped

The lead auditor then prepares a stage 1 audit report, which is sent to the organisation in good time before the stage 2 audit, thereby giving it the opportunity to correct or complete the management documentation and procedures.

This is followed by consultation with the organisation regarding the stage 2 audit, for which priorities are set.

As a rule, the stage 2 audit can be carried out at the organisation's premises at the agreed time, with the period between the stage 1 and stage 2 audit not exceeding six months. If major gaps are identified during the stage 1 audit, these are set out in detail in the report. Where appropriate, it may then be advisable or necessary to postpone the stage 2 audit date to give the organisation the opportunity to close these gaps.

Stage 2 audit

Following the arrangement of a date, the audit team conducts the stage 2 audit at the organisation's site(s) based on audit criteria and documentation for system audits. The procedure follows the relevant specifications of the applicable certification systems and begins with an opening meeting, followed by interviews with management and staff, on-site visits, the observation of activities and conditions, and document reviews to gather evidence of compliance with all standard requirements.

During the debriefing, the lead auditor/verifier provides those responsible with a verbal interim report to inform them of the status of the management system's certification/validation/approval.

If non-conformities are identified, the organisation is given the opportunity to analyse their causes and define measures to correct the non-conforming condition by a deadline specified in the non-conformity report. The successful implementation of these measures must be confirmed by the auditor/verifier, either by verifying subsequently submitted documents or by an on-site follow-up audit, before the certification process can continue. Non-conformities are checked for effective correction during the next audit.

4.3 Issue of certificate / validation of the environmental statement

Within ten working days, the lead auditor/verifier shall draw up an audit report containing all the results of the assessment.

In the case of certification of a management system in accordance with ISO 9001, ISO 14001 (DAkKS procedure), ISO 50001, ISO 27001, ISO 55001 and ISO 45001, or approval under AZAV, the final decision on the issue of a certificate lies with the Certification Committee. Upon successful review of the entire procedure, the committee issues the certificate.

For procedures in accordance with DAU regulations (e.g. validation of an environmental statement, certification to ISO 14001), the decision on the outcome of the procedure rests with the environmental verifier. Following the audit, the verifier validates the environmental statement or issues the certificate, as appropriate.

The certificate issued is valid for three years from the date of the certification decision (18 months for waste management, five years for AZAV), with annual surveillance audits taking place. GUTcert certificates are available in DIN A3 and DIN A4 sizes and in various languages. The certification status is made publicly available. Certifications in accordance with the IT Security Catalogue are additionally reported to the Bundesnetzagentur.

4.4 Certification mark

The use of the certificate and the certification mark are part of the certification contract concluded with the organisation and are governed by GUTcert's Certification Regulations. In accordance with these conditions, organisations certified by GUTcert may use the certification mark free of charge. They are entitled to display this certification mark on letters, brochures and information materials for promotional and image-building purposes.

Subject to the relevant provisions of the EMAS Regulation, organisations with a validated environmental statement may use the EMAS logo in their external communications.

4.5 Remote audits

GUTcert has the option of using IT resources in audits in consultation with the organisation (e.g. for remote audits). This saves travel time and reduces emissions associated with travel. The organisation's general consent is required to include remote audits in the audit programme.

Detailed regulations on the planning and conduct of remote audits can be found in AA162 Remote Audits.

5 Maintenance of certification

5.1 Surveillance audits

In accordance with the prescribed certification procedure, the prerequisite for the issue of a certificate is the annual on-site review of the management system by the auditor/verifier during the

validity of the certificate. The first surveillance audit following initial certification must be completed no later than twelve months after the date of the certification decision. All subsequent surveillance audits shall be carried out at least once per calendar year, preferably at intervals of twelve months. The dates are specified in the audit programme. The audit does not cover the full extent of the initial audit, but is limited to those parts essential to the functioning of the management system, such as

- internal audits and management review,
- handling of complaints and incidents (ISO 45001),
- effectiveness of the management system in terms of reaching targets,
- assessment of changes,
- ongoing operation control/management,
- progress in terms of continual improvement (including the correction of any minor non-conformities from previous audits) and
- the use of marks / other references on the certification.

Further applicable elements of the standard are selected by the audit team and included in the audit plan. The procedure otherwise follows that of a certification process.

The certification contract starts with the placement of the order by the client and covers the (initial) certification audit as well as the subsequent surveillance and recertification audits. In accordance with the current cost calculation, invoicing for audits in subsequent years takes place only after the respective services have been provided by GUTcert

When validating an environmental statement, surveillance audits may be required in accordance with EMAS regulations.

Special AZAV provision: The target date/cut-off date for the annual surveillance audits is the first day of the approval period. The audit must be carried out on or before the specified target date. If an audit takes place before the target date, the target date for the following year is generally postponed accordingly, so that the interval between audits does not exceed 365 days. This postponement of the target date does not apply to audits carried out up to 14 days before the target date.

In the event of a longer postponement of up to a maximum of 28 days, an application may be made to retain the original due date. To do so, a written application (by email with a brief explanation) must be submitted to GUTcert.

If a surveillance audit takes place more than 28 days before the due date, the due date is automatically brought forward to the date on which the audit is carried out. This date then applies as the new due date for subsequent years.

5.2 Transfer of an existing certification

A change of the certification body is also possible within the validity period of a certificate. The assessment of the certification and the issue of the certificate are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the relevant IAF guidelines.

Before a transfer can take place as part of a surveillance or recertification audit or during the course of the year a pre-transfer review is required. The audit is usually carried out as a document review.

5.3 Maintenance of certification in the event of exceptional circumstances

Organisations may temporarily be unable to carry out planned audits to maintain certification due to events beyond the organisation's control. Examples of such events include war, strikes, riots, terrorism, pandemics, floods, earthquakes, malicious computers hacking or other natural or man-made disasters.

In such cases, GUTcert may, at the organisation's request and following an analysis of the existing risks, amend the audit programme, postpone audits or even extend the validity of certificates.

6 Recertification (does not apply do AZAV)

A recertification audit or a revalidation is required before the certificate expires or for the preparation of a consolidated environmental statement. Before this process can begin, the company data held by GUTcert is forwarded to the organisation. This data must be checked by the organisation and approved by an authorised representative. On this basis, the audit scope and audit programme are then finalised.

The recertification audit should take place early enough to ensure the process is completed before the old certificate expires – generally no later than four weeks beforehand.

The procedure for recertification essentially follows that for initial certification/validation. However, the Stage 1 audit is usually omitted provided there are no significant changes to the management system.

A recertification audit at stage 2 assesses the ongoing conformity and effectiveness of the management system as a whole and confirms its continued relevance and applicability to the defined scope of certification. Previous audit reports from surveillance audits are used for this assessment. A new certificate is then issued.

The on-site audit reviews

- the effectiveness of the management system with respect to internal and external changes and its continued relevance and applicability to the scope of certification,
- the stated commitment to maintaining the effectiveness and improving the management system in order to enhance the overall performance,
- the client's management system and its performance regarding compliance with legal requirements,
- operational control and the steering of processes,
- internal audits and management review,
- top management's responsibility for the fundamental provisions of the management system, and
- links between normative requirements and

- policy,
- performance targets and requirements,
- all applicable legal requirements, and
- responsibilities, authorities, activities, procedures and findings from internal audits.

7 Appeals

Appeals against decisions made by the certification body may be submitted via the public appeal form or in writing by email to GUTcert. The deadline for submitting an appeal is one month from the date of notification of the decision.

8 Audits for special reasons

8.1 Extension of the scope of application

An extension of the scope may take place in conjunction with a surveillance audit or as a separate audit. Upon receipt of the application, the organisation will first receive a detailed list of the minimum documentation to be submitted. These are reviewed by the auditor/verifier, who then informs the organisation of any necessary measures. An additional audit may be required. In the case of waste management companies, an application for an extension of the permit is submitted to the approval authority. The organisation is then issued with a new certificate.

8.2 Unannounced and short-notice audits

In accordance with the accreditation rules, unannounced or short-notice audits may be carried out at certified clients' premises to investigate serious complaints, verify significant changes or reinstate suspended certifications. In such cases, the certification body exercises particular care when appointing the audit team, as there is no possibility of raising objections against members of the audit team.

9 Suspension, restriction and withdrawal of certificates

If the requirements for the validity of a certificate are no longer met, the certification body must take measures to prevent the use of this certificate or to ensure compliance with the certification requirements.

Procedures for the suspension, withdrawal or reinstatement of certificates are documented. The status of each certificate is made publicly available.

9.1 Suspension

A suspension may be imposed if

- the specified timeframe for completing the surveillance process is exceeded, or
- the organisation's certified management system fails to meet the requirements even after the specified deadline for corrective action has expired, or

- surveillance or recertification audits cannot be carried out at the required frequency or are not permitted, or
- a suspension is requested voluntarily.

The suspension shall be notified in writing, accompanied by the requirement to cease advertising the certificate or certification mark, or otherwise referring to the certification, until the suspension is lifted. A suspension may be granted at the organisation's request. The suspended certification must be reinstated once the issue that led to the suspension has been resolved.

A suspension may be imposed for a maximum period of six months (AZAV providers and measure approval: max. three months). A surveillance audit shall be carried out for reinstatement. Upon successful completion of the surveillance process, the suspension is lifted and the existing certificate becomes valid again. If the issues leading to the suspension have not been resolved within the specified period, this may result in the withdrawal or restriction of the certificate's scope.

9.2 Restriction of the scope

If the requirements for part of a certificate's scope of application are not met on a permanent basis, the scope of the certificate may be restricted by the certification body.

9.3 Withdrawal

The certification body must withdraw a certificate if

- the suspension of a certificate cannot be lifted by the deadline or
- the organisation voluntarily wishes to discontinue certification or
- the organisation ceases operations permanently.

The organisation will be requested in writing to return the certificate, to refrain from any further advertising using the certificate or the certification mark, and not to refer to an existing certification in any other way.

The head of the certification body is responsible for the withdrawal of a certificate.

10 Additional regulations regarding ISO 45001

If the certification body identifies a non-conformity on the part of the certified organisation regarding the non-compliance with relevant regulatory requirements, it undertakes to inform the organisation of this without delay. This applies to organisations that are certified in accordance with ISO 45001 by GUTcert or are undergoing an initial certification audit in accordance with ISO 45001 by GUTcert.

10.1 Finding during the audit

If the non-conformity is identified during an ISO 45001 audit, the procedure follows the steps described in stage 2 above.

10.2 Finding outside an audit

If the non-conformity is identified outside an ISO 45001 audit (e.g. as part of reporting on serious incidents relating to occupational health and safety) and has prompted the responsible supervisory authorities (e.g. occupational health and safety authority / trade inspectorate, police / public prosecutor's office) to carry out on-site investigations (see FL054EN_certregulations § 12 (3) or from other sources), the certification body will request further information or a statement from the organisation. This information is assessed at the certification body by the technical management (where appropriate, involving auditors familiar with the organisation).

If non-compliance with relevant regulatory requirements is confirmed, the organisation is given the opportunity to analyse the cause of the non-conformity and to define measures to correct the non-conforming condition by a date to be agreed with the certification body. The successful implementation of these measures must be confirmed by the auditor or the technical management, either through the review of subsequently submitted documents or through an audit. The period between the identification of the non-conformity and confirmation of the implementation of the measures is a maximum of 3 months but may be shortened by the certification body depending on the circumstances and the risk. The successful implementation of the measures is documented by the auditor or the technical management and submitted to an independent certification committee, with additional evidence if required. The certification committee decides on the maintenance of the certification.

If the non-conformity cannot be demonstrably corrected within the deadline and confirmed by the certification committee, the ISO 45001 certificate shall be suspended (see 9.1).