ISAB Mandatory Document for the Audit and Certification of a Management System Operated by a Multi-Site Organization

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0. INTRODUCTION

This document is for the audit and certification of management systems of organizations with a number of sites with a single management system. Depending on the certification scheme, there may be specific requirements related to permissible sampling, particularly sampling of sites. The aim of this document is to ensure that the audit provides adequate confidence in the implementation of the management system to the relevant standard across all sites listed on the certification document and that the audit is both practical and feasible in economic and operative terms.
This mandatory document is intended to be applied to multi-site organizations meeting the criteria set out below. It calls up other relevant ISAB mandatory documents, notably ISAB MD 5: Determination of Audit Time of Quality, Environmental, and Occupational Health & Safety

Management Systems.

1. SCOPE

This document is mandatory for Certification Bodies of Management Systems for the consistent application of Section 9 of ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems Part 1: Requirements, for all situations, other than where specified in scheme documentation, involving the audit and certification of Management Systems operated by organizations with a number of sites with a single management system. All clauses of ISO/IEC 17021-1 continue to apply, and this document does not supersede any of the requirements in that standard.

2. DEFINITIONS

- **2.1 Organization:** Person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives.
- **2.2 Permanent Site:** Site (physical or virtual) where a client organization performs work or from which a service is provided on a continuing basis.
- **2.3 Temporary Site:** Site (physical or virtual) where a client organization performs specific work or from which a service is provided for a finite period of time and which is not intended to become a permanent site.
- **2.4 Multi-site Organization:** An organization covered by a single management system comprising an identified central function (not necessarily the headquarters of the organization) at which certain processes/activities are planned and controlled, and a number of sites (permanent, temporary or virtual) at which such processes/activities are fully or partially carried out.
- **2.5 Central Function:** The function that is responsible for and centrally controls the management system.
- **2.6 Virtual Site:** Virtual location where a client organization performs work or provides a service using an online environment allowing persons from different physical locations to execute processes.
- **2.7 Sub-scope:** The scope of a single site.
- **2.8 Top Management:** Person or group of people who directs and controls an organization at the highest level.

3. APPLICATION

3.1 Site

3.1.1 A site could include all land on which processes/activities under the control of an organization at a given location are carried out, including any connected or associated storage of raw materials, by-products, intermediate products, end products and waste material, and any equipment or infrastructure involved in the processes/activities, whether or not fixed. Alternatively, where required by law, definitions laid down in national or local licensing regimes shall apply.
3.1.2 Where it is not practicable to define a location (e.g. for services), the coverage of the certification should take into account the organization's headquarters processes/activities as well as delivery of its services. Where relevant, the Certification Body may decide that the certification audit will be carried out only where the organization delivers its services. In such cases all the interfaces with its central function shall be identified and audited.

3.2 Temporary Site

3.2.1 Temporary sites that are covered by the organization's management system shall be subject to audit on a sample basis to provide evidence of the operation and effectiveness of the management system. They may, however be included within the scope of a multi-site certification and included on the certification document, subject to agreement between the Certification Body and the client organization. When temporary sites are shown on the certification documents, such sites shall be identified as temporary.

3.3 Multi-site Organization

3.3.1 A multi-site organization need not be a unique legal entity, but all sites shall have a legal or contractual link with the central function of the organization and be subject to a single management system, which is laid down, established and subject to continuous surveillance and internal audits by the central function. This means that the central function has rights to require that the sites implement corrective actions when needed in any site. Where applicable this should be set out in the formal agreement between the central function and the sites.

4. RATIONALE FOR THE PROPOSED APPROACH

- **4.1** This document deals with the auditing of a multi-site organization with a single management system.

- **4.2** Any one site may perform fully or partially the processes/activities covered by the scope of the management system, and different sites may belong to the same legal entity or not.
- **4.3** Any legal considerations concerning the organization's management system extending over a single legal entity or multiple legal entities is generally irrelevant to the auditing of the management system, and unless otherwise stated are not covered in this document.
- **4.4** It is the organization's management system which must be audited and certified; furthermore, by definition, a management system audit is only based on a limited sample of the information available. However it must be demonstrated that the management system is capable of achieving its intended results for all sites involved.
- **4.5** Therefore, it is logical to start by considering the organization and the implementation of its management system, and what type of sampling may be appropriate, if any.
- **4.6** In the case of a multi-site organization where each site is performing similar processes/activities, there may be a clear case to be made for appropriate "site sampling" (e.g. a chain of franchise stores or a bank branch network). On the other hand, this document also addresses the situation where the application of site sampling is not appropriate. There may be many reasons for this, such as: all the sites perform significantly different processes/activities in connection with the management system scope; the client requests each site to be audited; or there is a sector scheme or regulatory requirement stipulating that each site is to be audited systematically.

5. ELIGIBILITY OF A MULTI-SITE ORGANIZATION FOR CERTIFICATION

- **5.1** The organization shall have a single management system.
- **5.2** The organization shall identify its central function. The central function is part of the organization and shall not be subcontracted to an external organization.
- **5.3** The central function shall have organizational authority to define, establish and maintain the single management system.
- **5.4** The organization's single management system shall be subject to a centralized management review.
- **5.5** All sites shall be subject to the organization's internal audit programme.
- **5.6** The central function shall be responsible for ensuring that data is collected and analyzed from all sites and shall be able to demonstrate its authority and ability to initiate organizational change as required in regard, but not limited, to: (i) system documentation

and system changes; (ii) management review; (iii) complaints; (iv) evaluation of corrective actions; (v) internal audit planning and evaluation of the results; and (vi) statutory and regulatory requirements pertaining to the applicable standard(s).

6. METHODOLOGIES

6.1 Methodology for Auditing of a Multi-site Organization Using Site Sampling

6.1.1 Conditions

Sampling of a set of sites is permitted where the sites are each performing very similar processes/activities. Not all organizations fulfilling the definition of "multi-site organization" will be eligible for sampling. Certification Bodies shall have documented procedures to restrict such sampling where site sampling is inappropriate to gain sufficient confidence in the effectiveness of the management system under audit.

6.1.2 Sampling

The sample shall be partly selective based on the factors set out below and partly random, and shall result in a representative range of different sites being selected, ensuring all processes covered by the scope of certification will be audited. At least 25% of the sample shall be selected at random.

6.1.3 Size of Sample

The Certification Body shall have a documented procedure for determining the sample size. The minimum number of sites to be audited per audit is:

- **Initial audit:** the size of the sample shall be the square root of the number of sites ($y=\sqrt{x}$), rounded up to the next whole number.
- **Surveillance audit:** the size of the annual sample shall be the square root of the number of sites with 0.6 as a coefficient ($y=0.6\sqrt{x}$), rounded up to the next whole number.
- **Re-certification audit:** the size of the sample shall be the same as for an initial audit. Where the management system has proved to be effective over the certification cycle, the size of the sample could be reduced to $y=0.8\sqrt{x}$, rounded up to the next whole number.

6.1.4 Additional Sites

On the application of inclusion of new sites or a new group of sites to join an already certified multi-site organization, the Certification Body shall determine the required activities to be performed before including the new site(s) in the certificate.

7. AUDIT AND CERTIFICATION

The Certification Body shall have documented procedures to deal with audits under its multi-site procedure. Such procedures shall establish the way the Certification Body satisfies itself that the single management system governs the processes/activities at all the sites, and is actually applied to all the sites.

- **7.1 Application and Application Review:** The Certification Body shall obtain necessary information concerning the applicant organization to confirm that a single management system is deployed across the organization, determine the scope, understand legal arrangements, and determine audit time.
- **7.2 Audit Programme:** The audit programme shall include or refer to processes/activities provided on each site, and identify sites liable to be sampled.
- **7.3 Calculation of Audit Time:** The audit time must be sufficient to undertake an effective audit irrespective of the makeup of the organization. Unless precluded by specific schemes, the reduction of audit time per sampled site shall not be greater than 50%.
- **7.4 Audit Plan:** The Certification Body shall consider the certification scope, management system standard, processes/activities to be audited, audit time, and allocated audit team when preparing the plan.
- **7.7 Nonconformities and Certification:** When nonconformities are found at any individual site, investigation shall take place to determine whether the other sites may be affected. At the time of the decision-making process, if any site has a major nonconformity, certification shall be denied to the whole multi-site organization.
- **7.8 Certification Documents:** The certification document shall reflect the scope of certification and the sites and legal entities covered by the multi-site certification. The certification documentation will be withdrawn in its entirety if any of the sites does not fulfil the necessary provisions for the maintenance of the certification.