

THE INTERPRETATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SRPS ISO/IEC 17021 STANDARDS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The proof that a management system (SRPS ISO 9001, SRPS ISO 22000, SRPS ISO14001, SRPS ISO 27001, OHSAS 18001) has been implemented is its certification as well as regular surveillance. The need for certification is especially indicated by “large scale buyers” (the army, power industry, railways, large retail chains, professional associations, etc.) as a way of reduction of self inspection costs through a second party and the transfer of quality costs to manufacturers and service providers which will assure their quality through the appropriate certification. In today’s world the awareness of the significance of certification and accreditation of manufacturers in order to protect all stakeholder groups, is widely present. Foreign companies entering our market bringing their ways of doing business as well as the considerable effort made by the people who work on standardization in Serbia, resulted in 473 presently existing conformity assessment bodies (accredited laboratories, inspection bodies, product certification bodies, management system certification bodies) This number is close to or even exceeds those in the surrounding. SRPS ISO/IEC 17021:2011 represents the auditing standard for certification bodies that audit management systems and certify organizations. These requirements enable certification bodies to operate management systems certification in a consistent, competent and impartial manner, so their certification would be accepted and recognized on a national and international basis. [1] Besides, conformity assessment such as management system certification (in further text QMS¹) provides value to the organization, its customers and interested parties.

¹ QMS – Quality Management System – Sistem menadžmenta kvaliteta

2. SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT BODIES² FOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM CERTIFICATION WITHIN SRPS ISO 17021:2011

Specific requirements mentioned in SRPS ISO/IEC 17021:2011 are structural requirements, resource requirements, information requirements, process requirements and management system requirements.

The structure of SRPS ISO/IEC 17021:2011 is summed up as follows:

The structure of the new standard contains 6 annexes: one normative and five informative

Annex A (normative) – relates to the types of certification (inspection) body;

Annex B (informative) - provides the list of elements that can be given in the inspection report i.e. certificate.

The conducted review of SRPS ISO 17021:2011 hasn't cancelled nor deleted the previous version of the standard (SRPS ISO 17021:2006) but the changes have been made in the scope i.e. by extending the scope of the text. Clause 4 of the standard SRPS ISO 17021:2011 (4 Principles) which enable understanding of the essential nature of certification and underpin all the requirements of this standard, but as such do not represent auditable requirements. Clause 10 (10 Management System requirements for Certification Bodies) describes two alternative ways of demonstrating consistency in satisfying the requirements of this International Standard. Specified requirements for management system certification bodies (SRPS ISO 17021:2011) are structural requirements (6), resource requirements (7), information requirements (8), process requirements (9), and management system requirements for certification bodies (10).

3. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SRPS ISO/IEC 17021:2006 AND SRPS ISO/IEC 17021:2011

In this chapter the requirements of SRPS ISO/IEC 17021:2011, Conformity Assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems, which weren't incorporated in or which have been modified from the previous version of the same standard from 2006, as well as the differences between these two versions, are presented. The revision of standard is intended for certification bodies providing management system certification, accredited in accordance with SRPS ISO/IEC

² Filipović J., Božanić V., 2007, ISO, IEC i Svetska trgovina, Tehnika - Kvalitet, standardizacija i metrologija, Beograd, strana 1-4

(Conformity assessment bodies perform conformity assessment activities including certification, inspection, testing, and calibration. It is essential that customers, legislators and public have awareness of the competence of conformity assessment bodies for carrying out their activities. That is the main reason for increased demand for impartial audit (verification) of their competence.)

17021:2006, and preparing to conform to the new version of the standard as well as for the auditors of the Accreditation Body of Serbia, who perform accreditation activities.

The changes that occurred didn't affect all ten clauses of the standard, but six of them have undergone changes. Clauses two, four and six have a few deletions and corrections whereas the clauses with substantial changes are three, seven and nine. Clause 3 (3.Terms and Definitions) includes extended definitions; Clause 7 (7.Resource requirements) and Clause 9 (9.Process Requirements) which refers to the audit process with the additional items previously pursuant to SRPS ISO 19011:2011.³

The text of the standard ISO/IEC 17021:2011 *Requirements for the Bodies Providing Audit and Certification of management systems* remains practically unchanged when compared to the text of the existing standard, ISO/IEC 17021:2006, but it includes additional requirements for certification activities when it comes a third-party audit, and competences criteria for personnel taking part in certification process. These amendments to the standard occurred as the result of i.e. the response to the market requirements during the implementation of the previous version of the standard. The drawbacks of ISO 17021:2006 were in that it failed to define the methods for measuring the effectiveness of audit and to propose techniques for audit evaluation i.e. the observer of the audit or specific quantitative methods which posed a sufficient reason for the new, amended version, SRPS ISO/IEC 17021:2011.⁴

Normative references in SRPS ISO/IEC 19011:2011 *Guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems auditing* are no longer present because the text with specific requirements for the third-party certification is included in the standard and competence of management and personnel involved in certification process. In that manner all the requirements for system management certification bodies are comprised in SRPS ISO/IEC 17021:2011.

Apparent discrepancies:

- a. the structure of the standard (harmonized with ISO/IEC 17000:20075 series⁵);
- b. specific requirements of the standard have been examined in more detail (especially by taking the parts of the text from IAF/ILAC A4 guideline, but with further elucidation).
The item 4.3 has been amended by deletion of a sentence no longer in accordance with the new definition of competency (3.7).

³ SRPS ISO/IEC 19011:2011, Guidelines for auditing management systems

⁴ Edly Ferdin Ramly, 2007, Effectiveness of quality management system audit to improve quality performance - A conceptual framework, The Fifth International Conference on Quality and Reliability (ICQR 2007), Thailand, 25-30

⁵ ISO/IEC 17000:2007, Conformity assessment-Vocabulary and general principles

Resource requirements in Clause 7 have been modified i.e. two new requirements have been added 7.1.2 and 7.1.3, whereas 7.1.4 “applicable personal attributes” has been deleted and the note referring to the desired personal behaviour described in informative Annex D was added. Considering that SRPS ISO 19011:2011 is focused on QMS and EMS audit management it is reasonable that most of the changes occurred in Clause 9, Process Requirements. Majority of changes are elaboration of general requirements in 9.1. Compared to the initial audit and certification there is just one small change.

Fifteen general requirements from Clause 9.1, in ISO/IEC 17021:2006, are listed, with the exception of every clause now being given a title. Wit the exception of labeling, the topic remains the same. However, there are considerable amendments to each clause listed below, added in additional requirements based upon the content of ISO 19011. Among them, Clause 9.1.9 is the one that has undergone the most significant changes. The remaining clauses weren’t subjected to any substantial changes.

- 9.1.1 Audit programme (1 new requirement);
- 9.1.2 Audit plan (6 new requirements);
- 9.1.3 Audit team selection and assignments (4 new requirements);
- 9.1.4 Determining audit time (1 new requirement);
- 9.1.9 Conducting on-site audits (16 new requirements);
- 9.1.10 Audit report (1 new requirement, the content of the requirement);
- 9.1.12 Effectiveness of corrections and corrective measures (1 new obligation, records /evidence of the effectiveness of the review);
- 9.2 Initial audit and certification (1 new request);
- 9.2.2.2 Documented reasons for declining an application;

Several new notes (7.2.4, 9.1.1.2)

- c. A considerable number of definitions, 7, (inspection schemes and inspection system, etc.) has been added :

third-party certification auditing (needs to be defined because the auditors of ISO 19011:2011 consider there are other types of third-party auditing, as well)

- client;
- auditor;
- competence (deleted word *demonstrated*);
- guide;
- observer and
- technical area (elaborated in the same manner as Note in Clause 7).

Many of these definitions were needed because of the deleted references from SRPS ISO19011:2011.

- d. The possibility for certification/auditing body to operate management systems in one of the following manners:
 - In accordance with 8.1.2 ISO/IEC 17020 requirements or
 - In accordance with SRPS ISO 9001:2008.
- e. The requirement relating to preventive actions has been introduced;
- f. The requirement for an inspection body or organization to have an independently accessible account is excluded from the standard;
- g. Requirement for cooperation is given within a note.⁶

The other important aspect in the new version of the standard ISO/IEC 17021:2011 are changes in relation to competence of the personnel. Namely, ISO/IEC 17021:2011 defines competence as the ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve the intended results. Consequently, the need arises to define intended results for each certification activity as well as to apply evaluation processes in order to identify the personnel who have demonstrated the level of competence required for the different functions of the audit and certification process.⁷ The new version of the standard provides an informative annex defining desired personal behaviours which will enable certification bodies to use the advantages of individuals involved in certification activities and to overcome the weaknesses which could adversely affect these activities.

Some of the newly introduced requirements which could be highlighted are:

- Determining audit objectives, scope and criteria implies that certification audit shall evaluate the whole management system, not only for conformity criteria, but its ability to meet the needs of client organization and their customers, as well.
- Requirement that audit report shall define its content highlighting audit findings, evidence and conclusions in consistence with the requirements of the type of audit.

It is advisable to pay attention to a considerable number of conformity assessment schemes evaluated by accreditation bodies in accordance with criteria for accreditation body.

⁶ Accreditation Body of Serbia, webpage www.ats.rs

⁷ Natalija Jovičić Zarić, Primena standarda ISO/IEC 17021:2011, ATS Bilten, Beograd, 5.

. In order to harmonize the approach to evaluation of these schemes *Guidance EA2-13, EA Cross Frontier Accreditation Policy and Procedure for Cooperation between EA Members* has been developed. All national conformity assessment schemes, entitled to use accreditation symbols, signatories of EA MLA have to meet the requirements of this document. Endorsement of this document ensures a consistent approach in accreditation of conformity assessment schemes by all EA members.⁸ Also, the mandatory document, *EA 2/17, EA Guidance of Horizontal Requirements for the Accreditation of CABs for Notification Process*, contains horizontal criteria for conformity assessment bodies seeking accreditation for the purpose of notification and presents a mandatory document for all accreditation bodies which accredit for notification purposes.

4. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PARAGRAPHS FROM NEW REGULATIONS ON OPERATION AND ACCREDITATION OF MANAGEMENT SYSTEM CERTIFICATION BODIES

Having scrutinized this entire work and its topic we are able to draw certain conclusions focusing on the main reasons for using services of accredited certification bodies:

- Risk reduction
- Reduction of costs
- Growth of reputation and business recognition
- New possibilities- companies can improve their performances during the certification activities which opens new possibilities overlooked previously
- International recognition
- Possibilities for signing new deals- there are many examples where offerors are required to provide certified management systems for bidding purposes and where an offeree opts for an offeror certified by accredited certification body⁹.

Each specified ISO/IEC 17021:2011 requirement is important, but according to the opinion of the author of this work the crucial requirements of this standard are: resource requirements, process requirements and requirements for management system certification bodies. Resource requirements impose competence of management and personnel enabling management system certification. In the old version of the standard, ISO/IEC 17021:2006, most audits were incorporated in this requirement because market conditions called for a more detailed definition and familiarization with criteria for competence, knowledge and skills of a certification body personnel. There was a perceived need on the market for evaluation of the competence of personnel. The input values should demonstrate the required level of competence (including administrative personnel), in evaluation processes, or even exceed it, for various audits and certification

⁸ Natalija Jovičić Zarić, *Primena standarda ISO/IEC 17021:2011*, ATS Bilten, Beograd, strana 5.

⁹ Standardization Law, 2009 :”Certification bodies are conformity assessment bodies through a third party”

processes, in order to achieve the maximum results in the best possible way and to mutual satisfaction. Also, niceness and behaviour (being ethical, open-minded, tenacious, versatile, observant, diplomatic, collaborative, perceptive, decisive, self-reliant, professional, morally courageous and organized) are the determining factor whether a client will continue to make use of a certification body's services, to develop confidence (assurance of quality) that a certification body satisfies the quality requirements, and to share his/her positive experience with other potential clients. Going beyond mere satisfaction of requirements means providing assurance in high quality of the services offered by certification body. One of the ways to act preventively is based upon our own as well as on others' experience. Process requirements make it possible for us to relive that experience and by harmonizing our actions prevent mistakes from recurring. Benefiting from audits (Stage 1 and Stage 2 audit), surveillance activities, recertification, special audits, appeals, complaints, records, possible suspending, withdrawing or reducing the scope and object of audit, a certification body can make corrections (either in case of nonconformities of a client or in its own performances) and afterwards take corrective measures to identify the cause of the nonconformity that has occurred. The certification body would thereby be able to improve its performances, effect improvement and timely notify its client of potential problems/nonconformities. In that manner a high level of contentment of interested parties interests will be reached in the management system certification field.

In Clause 3 (3 Terms and definitions) definitions have been widened and some terms which are of key importance have been added, because it was impossible to interpret, understand and implement the requirements of SRPS ISO/IEC, unless we understand basic concepts being used throughout SRPS ISO/IEC 17021:2011 (certified client, impartiality, consultancy services, third-party certification auditing, client, auditor, competence, guide, observer, technical area).

5. CONCLUSION

Accreditation system functioning with the use of observation of mandatory rules builds up mutual trust in the competence of conformity assessment bodies among the member states and thereby in certificates and audit reports they issue, as well.

Enforcement of ISO/IEC 17021:2011 could spur certification bodies to comply with obligation to introduce certain changes to their procedures, provide new training programs, or modify and enhance existing ones, upgrade software and system application in order to satisfy all requirements. Accreditation bodies will scrutinize the implementation of the requirements of the new standard in certification bodies' headquarters during initial assessment, surveillance audit, or recertification in conformity with their plans.

Observance of the requirements incorporated in SRPS ISO/IEC 17021:2011 should enable certification bodies to conduct management system certification activities in a consistent and impartial manner and thereby ease the process of recognition of such bodies and the acceptance of their certifications on national and international level.

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