



## 1 Meaning and purpose of the certification rules

This guideline<sup>1</sup> provides information on the rules specified by SOCIALCERT GmbH for granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending and withdrawing the certification. The rules describe the necessary conditions for these actions, under consideration of the normative requirements.

## 2 Responsibility

The responsibility for the certification decision lies with the certification board of SOCIALCERT. Hence the certification board has the fundamental authority to make decisions leading to granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending and withdrawing the certification based on the records and recommendation of the certification board auditor.

## 3 Granting the certification

The certification can be granted under the following conditions:

- a) Successful audit of the field to be certified including documentation, business premises, management and personnel according to the SOCIALCERT criteria appropriate for the area.
- b) Documented commitment of the Client to maintain and further develop the quality management system to be certified or the offered product or service and the competence of its personnel according to the normative requirements.
- c) Documented commitment of the Client to inform SOCIALCERT at short notice about all planned and/or completed changes with respect to status or management, especially on changes in the facility's management, in its legal, economic, or organisational status, in the event of fundamental changes in regulations and procedures, in case of relocation, or for changes in the field of certification as well as other changes which could have an impact on the conformity with the underlying standard and performance capability.
- d) Documented commitment of the Client to only make use of certification to the extent it refers to the field of certification. If the Client has had the product conformity of its products certified according to DIN EN 45011, it may not give the impression that its quality management system has been certified. Likewise if the Client has had its quality management system certified, it may not give the impression that its products have been certified.
- e) Documented commitment of the Client to refrain from bringing SOCIALCERT into disrepute, either by wrongful reference to the certification or by any misleading statements.
- f) Documented commitment of the Client to make use of the provided SOCIALCERT mark exclusively according to the SOCIALCERT Mark Statutes.
- g) Documented commitment of the Client to pay the costs of the certification including the audits (certification audit and surveillance audits).

Evidence is provided on the one hand by the audit reports and the documentation on the elimination of serious non-conformities as well as by explanations provided by the Client. The certification board of SOCIALCERT examines whether all these conditions have been

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the accreditation rules of the German Association for Accreditation and Certification (GAZ) described in the guideline LF5.



met by consulting all the documents and preliminary information about the Client. A certification decision is then made on the basis of this recommendation. Subsequently the management board issues the official certificate.

## **4 Maintenance of the certification**

The certification can be maintained if the certified Client provides the requisite evidence that it sustainably meets the requirements of the SOCIALCERT criteria. This evidence is provided through periodical surveillance audits comprising the examination of the certified field, including documentation and personnel.

In the same way, the surveillance audits conducted at intervals of every three or four years provide evidence of the competence or continuity and further development of the certified quality management system, product, or service.

## **5 Extension of the certification**

If a Client's already certified field is to be extended (e.g. to a new field of activity, new products or services), then this extended part of the certification is initially not covered. According to Section 3 c of this guideline, the Client shall announce such extension to SOCIALCERT.

If the Client desires the extended part to be included in the certification, the Client must apply to SOCIALCERT in writing for such an extension and specify details, possibly by submitting relevant documents. The management board of SOCIALCERT then decides whether the information received suffices for a decision or whether additional information or documents are required. In most cases the board will arrange for an on-site audit to determine the extended field's conformity to the standard.

If this evidence is provided, the certification board of SOCIALCERT checks it and makes a decision, and the management board orders a certificate to be re-issued with the inclusion of the extended field.

## **6 Reducing the scope of the certification**

Reasons for reducing the scope of the certification are the following circumstances:

- a) According to Section 3 c of this guideline, the Client informs SOCIALCERT that its certified field of activity has changed in such a way that only a part of it is being maintained (e.g. a reduction of the activity "Research and Development", the sale or shut-down of essential parts of the facility, reduction of the range of products and services, etc.).
- b) The Client informs SOCIALCERT that it only wants to have a reduced field of activity certified.
- c) In the course of a surveillance audit or recertification audit, the SOCIALCERT auditor determines that the certified field of activity or other significant criteria (e.g. staffing level) have changed, and records this change in the audit report.
- d) SOCIALCERT learns via a third party that changes in the certified field of its Client have taken place which might possibly influence the scope of the certification.

In any of these cases, the management board of SOCIALCERT shall attempt to verify the facts and determine the extent of change in order to be able to decide whether the changes justify reducing the scope of the certification. If there are no confirmed findings available for a decision, an on-site audit carried out by an auditor commissioned by SOCIALCERT will be arranged at short notice in agreement with the Client.



Subsequently the certification board of SOCIALCERT decides on the maintenance, reduction, suspension, or withdrawal of the certification. The reduction will be expressed by a new certificate showing a respectively reduced scope of validity.

In the event of c) and d) of this section, the certification board of SOCIALCERT also decides whether to issue a warning in the event of a minor violation of the certification rules (see section 3) on the part of the Client.

Suspension and withdrawal of the certification are regulated in sections 7 and 8 of this guideline.

### **7 Suspension of the certification**

The certification can be suspended by the certification board if

- a) the Client has not fulfilled its payment obligations despite receiving a reminder,
- b) there are serious deviations from the regulatory framework underlying the certification which were determined during an audit which have a significant impact on the field of activity or manner of work of the Client or on the offered product or service and which have not been able to be eliminated in a reasonable amount of time,
- c) while evaluating a complaint or information made known to SOCIALCERT from a third party, the Client does not meet the requirements,
- d) the Client refuses an on-site audit,
- e) the Client itself requests a suspension of the certificate.

After review and decision by the certification board, and after a hearing of the Client, the management board of SOCIALCERT informs the Client of the suspension of the certification. The suspension is limited to a period of six months. If the reason for the suspension decision is not remedied by then, the withdrawal of the certification supersedes the suspension (see section 8).

Otherwise the Client must provide evidence in the cases b) and c), for instance by means of documents or an on-site re-audit, to demonstrate that the serious deviations have been remedied. Subsequently the certification can be re-issued.

With the suspension of the certification, the Client relinquishes the right to use the SOCIALCERT mark and may make no public use whatsoever of its previous certified status during the time of suspension (e.g. through advertising, written documents, internet, etc.).

The Client itself has the right, for whatever reason whatsoever, to apply to SOCIALCERT for the suspension of the certification. As a rule the application is granted by the certification board of SOCIALCERT. Deadlines and consequences of the suspension remain intact as described above.



## 8 Withdrawal of the certification

The certification can be withdrawn by the board of SOCIALCERT if

- a) deficiencies are repeatedly determined during the re-certification or surveillance audits which allow the conclusion that the Client persistently fails to meet the normative requirements or SOCIALCERT criteria, although respective corrective actions were agreed upon,
- b) the Client has consciously brought SOCIALCERT into disrepute through false statements,
- c) the SOCIALCERT mark has been misused despite warning, without any fault on the part of SOCIALCERT, and no surveillance audit or recertification audit has been successfully conducted prior to the expiry of the validity of the certification as reported in the certificate.
- d) the reasons for a possible prior suspension of the certification within six months were not remedied,
- e) the business activity of the Client for the certified field or offered product or service has been discontinued.

The Client loses the right to use the SOCIALCERT mark upon withdrawal of the certification. The Client is removed from the list of certified bodies and may no longer make any public use whatsoever of its previous certified status (e.g. through advertising, written documents, internet, etc.).

## 9. Audits conducted by the director

If the director of SocialCert himself conducts an audit of the Client, as member of the certification board he must abstain from participating in the decision on granting certification in this case.

## 10. Body to guarantee impartiality

The advisory board as the body to guarantee impartiality conducts an evaluation of the impartiality of the audits, the certifications, and the decision-making processes of the certification body. (See [Beiratsordnung](#) [Advisory Board Regulations])