

EOQ personnel certification – scheme development activities and recognition status at EA

- EOQ achieved milestone in Europe-wide recognition of quality personnel –

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The European Organisation for Quality (EOQ) is the first organisation to receive a European recognition for its competence certification program of quality personnel.

In January 2017, the EOQ was acknowledged by the European Accreditation (EA) for its quality management personnel program (EOQ COS / CS 9000). This allows the accredited certification of quality personnel throughout Europe.

“In times of progressing global harmonisation of standards, the certification of the competence of persons according to internationally accepted regulations is becoming more and more important,” says Thomas Votsmeier, Head of the EOQ Technical Working Group and representative of the German Association for Quality (DGQ). “The recognition by the EA is a valuable milestone for us as leading organisation promoting quality in Europe.”

The recognition has many advantages. First of all, certification bodies have the opportunity to use a harmonised high level and proofed certification scheme for quality personnel in their business. Furthermore, certified persons have an independent and actual proof of their competence as quality manager or auditor that is accepted from national quality organisations and accreditation bodies all over Europe. Organisations engaging experts in the area of quality have a proof that certified persons they employ or contract are competent to do their job and have the needed know-how and experience.

In Europe, the certification of quality personnel (including quality managers and auditors) has been gaining importance throughout the years. Since 1993, EOQ has been developing standardised education programs and, since 2008, certification programs are based on ISO 17024. They build the basis for further education and certification programs offered by EOQ's national members.

The specific ISO 17024-based competence approach follows the idea that not only knowledge and skills but also the ability to apply them is necessary for a successful implementation of know-how in the practise. Thus, competence proofs are required in all actual management system certification standards (like ISO 9001:2015). EOQ certification programs follow this approach since 2008.

“Competence certificates based on EOQ personnel certification schemes have an outstanding acceptance and are objective proof of competence due to the world-wide accepted

processes of assessment, examination, certification and re-certification used in accordance with the ISO/IEC 17024 standard requirements,” says Dr. Eric Janssens, EOQ Director General. The development of EOQ’s program has required a comprehensive and long-term development and discussion process between national quality organisations and other interested parties, such as certified persons, companies, training organisations, standardisation organisations, national accreditation bodies and, finally, the EA as the umbrella organisation of national European accreditation bodies. The standard developing process of EOQ is comparable to that of an ISO standard. Furthermore, detailed requirements of EA have to be taken into account to ensure a unified approach with harmonised competence requirements on a sufficient level of a comprehensive know-how and thus independent from the individual personnel certification body.

The long development process has now been completed with the official recognition by EA. At international congresses and meetings of EA as well as on regular EOQ working group meetings, actual developments, results, and crucial issues are regularly discussed in order to keep the programs up-to-date and aligned with market requirements.

The certification programs are published on the EOQ homepage (<http://www.eoq.org>) and are available for use for training organisations and personnel certification bodies under defined conditions.