**Level Certification Programme**

**Information for Applicants (Draft 26 November 2018)**

These notes are guidance for those companies wishing to apply for Certification of product lines to the European Level sustainability Standard.

**Programme Owner**

Program Owner is the European Office Furniture Federation (FEMB) represented at the present time by Industrieverband Büro und Arbeitwelt e.V. (IBA).

**Brochure and Description**

A brochure which describes the Level programme is available. There is also a German version, and both will be updated to include some practical information from this document.



**The Standard**

“Sustainability requirements for office and non-domestic furniture for indoor use, Edition 2017” is the only accredited standard for sustainability in the office furniture sector. This document is the basis for Level certification and has been developed by FEMB, the European Office Furniture Federation, using as a basis the American standard ANSI/BIFMA e3 together with the European criteria for the green public procurement and the specifications for the award of several voluntary Ecolabels. Organisations that choose to assess their furniture products to this Standard can document their achievements by third-party verification of conformance.



**Guidance Manual**

The Guidance Manual is intended to provide helpful advice, informational resources, references, etc. regarding evaluation and conformance strategies for each credit within the FEMB Standard on “Sustainability requirements for office and non-domestic furniture for indoor use “. This document is intended for certification bodies and applicants (and their suppliers) as they evaluate products and implement the Standard within their respective enterprises.



**Level Certification A Guide to Costs and Timescales**

The costs for participation in the Level Certification Programme have three elements and requires the Applicant to complete separate agreements with the Certification Body and the FEMB.

1. **Licence Fee.** The applicant will pay the FEMB a fee of €2,000\* for each year of participation in the Level Certification Programme. This fee is due on issue of the first Certificate and every 12 months on the anniversary of the certification date. It is a fee for the Applicant company and is not determined by the number of product lines that are certified.



1. **Audit Costs.** Audits are carried out by approved Certification Bodies who will advise their terms and conditions and costs to the applicant. As at November 2018 there are four certification bodies approved.
   1. TÜV Rheinland (Germany),
   2. Tecnalia (Spain),
   3. SCS Global (International)
   4. UL (International)

The costs for the audit will depend on several factors but it is expected that the **average cost per product line will be around €2,000**. And so, the actual cost will be below or above this average.

**Factors to Consider.**

* Number of lines audited at one time
* Location of factory(s)
* Terms from certification bodies
* Complexity and scope of the product line
* Checks and surveillance audits
* Audit Time\*\*

**Checks and Surveillance Audits.** Changes in product lines, production methods and potentially updates to the FEMB Standard may require revaluation. Products shall be revaluated if significant changes to materials, processes or the facility occur that affect the eligibility for any credit within the scope of conformance at the time of the change.

* It is recommended that the Applicant agrees with its Certification Body a method to exchange information on a regular basis. If there is a cost for this, it should be agreed between the parties.
* To retain Certification applicants must advise Certification Bodies of any changes when they occur.
* There **shall be** one surveillance audit in the second year of certification. The scope of cost for the surveillance audit should be discussed between the parties to avoid misunderstanding. The scope of cost will be related to each applicants’ unique circumstances and as at the date of these Information notes, has not been established. This will become clear as certifications are achieved, and over time the resulting experience of the surveillance audits will provide a framework for potential costs.

We would suggest, at this time, (and without any commitment) to consider about 50% or the original audit cost as a guide. It will most likely not exceed initial audit costs when applicant’s conditions did not change substantially.

**Certification Body Agreement**

Each applicant will enter an agreement with the Certification Body for authorised use of license mark.



**Audit After Three Years.** The certification is valid for a period of three years. Before the end of the three years the applicant should discuss and agree the re-audit of product lines with their Certification Body. The cost of a re-audit will depend on factors such as the change in product lines, manufacturing, changes to the Standard etc. The Surveillance Audit and regular communication during the three years, could potentially have efficiency benefits for the re-audit.

1. **Additional Costs.** Each applicant should consider the internal cost and resources required to prepare for the Audit and certification process. Most companies will already have Sustainability credentials and compliance to local standards and norms so will be familiar with the type of preparation required. The Guidance Manual is a good place to start to review this and discussions with Certification Bodies will be an important aspect in the process.
2. **Timescales.** It is only possible to give some indication of this and it will depend on how already prepared the applicant already is, how many lines are to be audited, and how much resource they can apply to the project. We would suggest several months are necessary and consider it to be in the region of 3 to 6 months.

**Notes:**

**\* Licence fee of €2,000 is regarding member companies of the FEMB.**

**\*\* The application of “Technical Document Normative (TDN) 05 Audit Time” is mandatory to calculate audit time.**

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