

## Certification and group certification

A certificate is a written statement, usually intended as proof of the quality of a company, people, service or product. Generally, there are various criteria underlying the issue of a certificate, such as standards, legal requirements or industry rules. The issue of a certificate is usually preceded by a verification act such as an inspection, audit or other form of verification. In this way, products, processes, services, systems or persons can be eligible to obtain a certificate. Certification is therefore the process of testing. For example, whether a hair salon meets the requirements of sustainability. These requirements are then described in a so-called sustainability system in which a standard is laid down when a salon does and when it does not meet the requirements. This is determined by an inspection (audit) by an external organization (certification organization) and if the company complies with this, it receives a certificate or label. This allows it to demonstrate to its customers, suppliers and others that certain requirements (for example with regard to sustainability) are met.

### Group certification

Group certification has been developed to offer micro- and smaller companies (SMEs) an affordable solution for obtaining a certificate or label, for example for “sustainability in the hair & beauty salon”. The formula is simple: a system has been set up and is managed by the so-called “Group Manager”. This system with so called “blueprint material” on, for example, sustainability in the hair & beauty salon, can be used by a group of companies. These companies do not need to have any ties with each other except that they will use the same system (for example sustainability). The individual company uses specially developed blueprint material, which must be translated into its own business situation. This blueprint material may not be modified in terms of structure. We use a system for the whole group. The translation can be performed independently or (for parts) support is called in via an external consultant.

The concept of group certification is a solution for many companies, because of the balance between advice, blueprint material, company-specific efforts, costs and certification. Companies participating in group certification use the same blueprint material and are assessed annually by the consultant during an internal audit. A number of group members receive an external audit based on a sample (the square root of the total number of members in a group).

#### **The main benefits**

A group of companies has a Group Manager who arranges coordination and acts as an advisor to the company and will work with you to determine whether your system meets the certification criteria based on their expertise. This is done by performing a full internal audit. During the internal audit, the consultant will inform you about new developments and you will receive advice on possible and necessary improvements in the company based on the shortcoming from this internal audit. Changes in standards and / or laws and regulations are always discussed and, where possible, immediately implemented in the system. In short: people are permanently assured of relevant information and an up-to-date system.

#### **The control**

The Group Manager is in turn audited by an external certification organization. The certification bodies check the system drawn up by the Group Manager (for example for sustainability in the salon) by means of an office audit. Various aspects of the group certificate are assessed at the office. To complete the audit, a sample of the group members is taken to check the system in practice. A check

(audit) is carried out on a limited number of group members. The results of the audits are fed back to the group manager and if the result is satisfactory, the certificate is issued. This means that all members of the group are also certified.