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| **REGULATION**  **OPERATION OF THE IMPARTIALITY COMMITTEE** |
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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to describe the responsibilities and operation of the Impartiality Committee, which is established by the Agency with the aim of monitoring its independence and impartiality. The mission of the Impartiality Committee is to ensure that the procedures and regulations related to the Certification System are fair, equitable and integral for all customers. The Commission also assesses, manages and gives its opinion on complaints, objections or appeals on audit or certification issues submitted by interested parties.

2. DESCRIPTION

The Impartiality Committee is the independent audit body of the Certification scheme and consists of three (3) members who equally represent all parties involved. Its members are appointed by the Director General of the Agency.

The Impartiality Committee reports, organizationally, directly to the Gen. Director of the Agency, her term of office is four years and is automatically extended.

The fundamental role of the Impartiality Committee is to monitor the application of provisions to ensure impartiality.

Indicatively, the advice provided by HCC members to **VALIDX GROUP** refers to the following:

* policy issues related to audit, inspection and certification services.
* issues related to the inspection, control and certification process,
* issues related to possible influences from economic factors and excessive customer demands.
* issues related to corrections and/or corrective actions to address incidents where impartiality in taking a certification decision is demonstrably threatened or has been impaired
* content of the Code of Conduct, the Audit Regulation and the Risk Assessment Study for the impartiality and independence of the Agency.

The Impartiality Committee shall be composed of members who shall ensure the impartiality and integrity of its decisions and shall ensure the representation of all interested parties without any party taking precedence over the others. The decisions of its members are characterized by legality, independence of opinion, equality, objectivity and impartiality. The composition of the Impartiality Committee is representative and consists of the Representative of the Agency and by the Legal Representative who can deal with the appeals-objections issues and either by the representative of the site.... or by members, where necessary, who may be invited to advise on technical matters by external experts and advisers, whose independence from the objection under consideration is ensured.

The three-member committee always consists of one member as Representative of the Agency, one member as Legal Representative and where appropriate one member from the Representative of the field.... The total number of members of the Impartiality Committee is 6 including alternate members.

When inviting external consultants by the Agency, the requirements in qualifications (education, training, experience, etc.) are taken into account and should always be documented with the relevant documents (qualifications, CVs, certificate of professional activities of invited consultants, etc.), which are kept in the archive of the external collaborators of the Agency.

In case of withdrawal of a member from the Impartiality Committee, the election of a new member is made by decision of the Director General of the Agency without disturbing the fair representation of all interested parties.

Replacement of a member before the expiration of his term of office may take place in cases where the member: dies, resigns, loses the status on the basis of which he was appointed member, invokes reasons of impartiality, independence, integrity & confidentiality, or discloses any potential conflict of interest with the client.

Also, the replacement of a member takes place if it is judged that he/she performs his/her duties improperly or affects the balance of the Impartiality Committee. The replacement act in this case must be fully justified.

The Impartiality Committee has all the necessary access to all information necessary to ensure the implementation of the Agency's operations.

Members of the Commission shall not participate in inspections.

Please note that the members of the Impartiality Committee cannot simultaneously be Compliance Inspectors of the same Body, or Compliance Inspectors, members of the Impartiality Committee or members of the Certification Board of another Body.

3. POWERS OF THE COMMISSION

The responsibilities of the Impartiality Committee are:

* To monitor the implementation of certification procedures and carry out, at its discretion, a sample examination of evaluation and certification decisions.
* To supervise the way certification services are provided in order to ensure equal treatment and impartiality in the treatment of the Company's customers.
* To be informed about the Non-Conformities recorded during the inspections of ESYD according to the standard ELOT EN ISO/IEC 17065 as well as the complaints and objections submitted to **VALIDX GROUP** against the decisions to grant, suspend or revoke certification.
* Evaluate the preventive measures taken by **VALIDX GROUP** to eliminate risks of occurrence of phenomena that compromise the impartiality, independence and integrity of certification services.
* To ensure that all inspection activities and actions of the personnel involved do not undermine the integrity and impartiality of the Certification.
* To commit actions (information, complaint, etc.) to the authorities, to ESYD. or to interested parties, in case it is not heard on important issues and decisions in relation to the Certification Scheme and are related to the integrity and impartiality of the System, or if it considers that its work is hindered in any systematic or other way.
* To perform risk assessment tasks by customers that affect the certification body but also risks that affect customers in the market by extending the bad reputation of customers and the organization.
* To control by sampling the implementation of the policy and procedures during the implementation of inspections/audits and certification decisions.
* Inform interested parties when it finds breaches of the rules set to ensure impartiality
* To arbitrate in any case of disagreement related to certification between customers and the organization, which has not been initially resolved by the organization and the customer.
* Evaluate financial data where they are relevant to the interests of the organization and clients and may affect the independence and impartiality of the certification function.
* To facilitate VALIDX GROUP**'s access to** industry know-how

In case of any irregularity and deviation in matters of impartiality and integrity from the defined inspection procedure, the Impartiality Committee recommends and ensures that the necessary compliance measures are taken.

In case of non-response of the administrative bodies of **VALIDX GROUP** to the recommendations of the Impartiality Committee, or obstruction in any way of the smooth operation and exercise of its duties, the Committee has the right to address a substantiated information note to the National Accreditation Body (ESYD) after informing the Management of **VALIDX GROUP** for this intended action, at least three months before informing ESYD and having complied with the necessary confidentiality rules.

The secretarial support of the operation of the Impartiality Committee is provided by **VALIDX GROUP** and this includes ensuring that the minutes of the Committee's meetings are kept, that invitations to a meeting are sent and anything else necessary for its smooth and effective operation.

All input data (if any) that contravenes the procedures and requirements of the Agency are not followed. The Agency's decision shall be substantiated by the adequate recorded justification in the minutes of the Committee on form E-72:

"Minutes of the Impartiality Committee Meeting", and reviewed by the Management at least once a year.

Where doubts arise as to the consistent application of the **VALIDX GROUP** Quality System, the Impartiality Committee may request an internal audit of the relevant activities and the necessary corrective measures, the implementation of which must be notified to the Commission.

4. OBLIGATIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE IMPARTIALITY COMMITTEE

The members of the Impartiality Committee are obliged to:

* Operate in such a way as to provide clients, the Management of the Agency and all interested parties with confidence in their competence, integrity and independence.
* Take all decisions with impartiality and integrity.
* To maintain absolute confidentiality regarding the data and information they receive in the context of their duties.
* Report immediately and not conceal from the Technical Director and/or the General Manager of the Agency discrepancies and findings they identify in the context of exercising their duties, or any interests they have or acquired along the way and are related to the Certification Scheme.

5. MEETINGS AND DECISIONS OF THE IMPARTIALITY COMMITTEE

The Committee meets once a year, if deemed necessary due to the investigation of any potential irregularity and divergence in matters of impartiality and the conduct of the meeting is determined by the Director-General of the Agency. Extraordinary meetings are held when there is a risk of impartiality, or any other risk that may result in circumvention of the Agency's policy on the granting of certificates.

The Impartiality Committee has a quorum when at least three (3) of the three (3) full or alternate members are present. Decisions of the Commission shall be taken on the basis of a majority of all members. The decisions of the Committee may not be amended by decisions of other bodies of the Agency, but only by a new decision of the Impartiality Committee if there have been new data and information on the matter.

The Impartiality Committee keeps minutes of each meeting, with the issues discussed and decisions taken and recorded in form E-72: "Minutes of the Impartiality Committee Meeting". The minutes are signed by all members and are kept under the responsibility of the Quality Manager.

In case of objections, appeals or complaints against the decisions of the Impartiality Committee, these are reviewed by the Management

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Each of the members of the Impartiality Committee, as well as its alternate members, signs forms E.9 & E.11: "Declaration of Confidentiality-Independence" respectively, declaring his/her compliance with the rules and the Certification Scheme of the Body, including confidentiality, impartiality and conflict of interest.

The obligations of confidentiality and confidentiality apply even after the expiration of their term of office by the Impartiality Committee, for the duration of (2) years.

7. AMENDMENTS

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