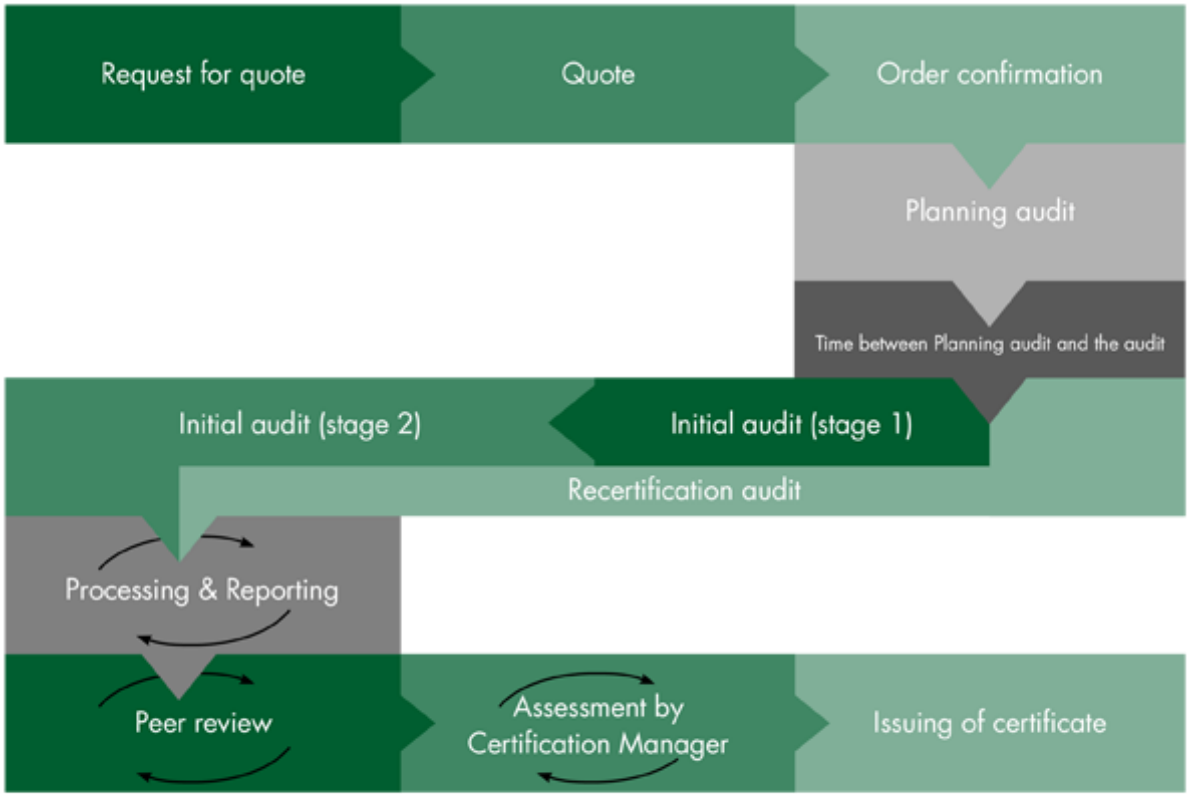
Description of management system certification procedure and process certification procedure

This document describes the standard procedure for management system certification[1] and process certification[2]. It explains the process from request for proposal through to certification. The procedure is slightly different for audits and product certification. *For more details about product testing and certification, see dekra-product-safety.nl.*

Our approach

A certification procedure is made up of certain steps. By completing these steps carefully and consistently, we assure you of a diligent certification process. The image below visualizes the procedure[3].



In the process steps where you see a cycle, an extra check takes place.
The next process step follows after this step has been performed correctly.

A check is performed in the process steps showing arrows to indicate a cycle.
We do not move on to the next process step until it is confirmed that this step has been completed correctly.

[1] *As intended in ISO 17021, i.e. also safety management systems*
[2] *As intended in ISO 17065*
[3] *An annual peer review is a compulsory aspect of a number of schemes and of process certification.*

Explanation of the steps in the certification procedure

1. **Request for proposal, proposal issued & order confirmation**
   If you are interested in one or more of our services, you can request a proposal using the form on our website. Once we have received the completed form from you, we will issue a proposal. If we discover that we first need additional information from you, we will contact you. Along with proposal we also send you a certification agreement which includes details of both parties' rights and responsibilities in relation to the certificate. To confirm the order, simply sign the certification agreement and return it to us.

2. **Scheduling an audit**
   The DEKRA planning department will contact you within 10 days of receiving the signed documentation to schedule an audit. When scheduling the audit, we consider the auditor's qualifications and expertise, the audit location, the availability of you – as the customer – and the auditor, and any project sites that need to be visited. We comply with the accreditation guidelines at all times.

3. **Initial certification audit (phases 1 and 2)**
   The initial certification audit comprises two phases:

   Phase 1
   During this phase, we gather and validate the information provided by you and we draw up the audit plan. We determine whether you are ready for audit phase 2 by assessing a number of aspects: the management system documentation, the internal audit process and our own management review. The auditor prepares a report on this and discusses the results with you.

   Phase 2
   During this phase, DEKRA evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of the system in practice based on interviews with employees at all levels of your organization. This enables us to determine whether your organization actually puts into practice what it has documented (checked in Phase 1). Needless to say, this must also comply with the standard. Nonconformities can be identified during this phase.

4. **From Processing & Reporting to Evaluation of Certification Manager**
   Following the audit, the auditor writes a report. Various specialists then check the report and the process to assure you that everything has been done correctly. This report is then used as the basis for approval of the certification. If all the steps have been completed correctly, the certification will be approved.

   However, there can be situations in which not all the certification criteria are met, such as if the auditor does not make a positive recommendation or if not all contractual requirements are met. In such cases, the certification management decides against awarding a certificate. It is possible to contest such a decision.

5. **Certificate**
   If the certification is approved, you receive the certificate. This is usually valid for three years, but the actual validity is always indicated on the certificate itself. You can display our DEKRA Seal to show your stakeholders that you are certified. For the options and terms & conditions of use, see the promo kit. Furthermore, your organization is added to the database on our website listing all certified organizations. In many cases, your certificate is also listed on the scheme owner's website.

6. **Follow-up audits**

After certification, a follow-up audit is conducted at least once a year. The first follow-up audit takes place 9 months after the certificate is issued. During the follow-up audits, we recheck the functionality, effectiveness and performance of your business processes. These audits generally take one third of the time involved in the initial certification audit.

7. **Recertification audit**
   A recertification audit is conducted three years after initial certification. This entails a complete reassessment in line with the step-by-step procedure. The recertification audit takes place at least four months before the expiry date of the current certificate in order to allow enough time to resolve any nonconformities before the certificate ceases to be valid. DEKRA announces this audit approximately three months before it is due to take place. This audit generally takes two thirds of the time involved in the initial certification audit.

The audit

Each audit comprises a number of basic elements: the opening meeting, the deliberation, the core of the audit and the closing meeting.

ELEMENT	OPENING MEETING	CORE OF THE AUDIT	CONSULTATION	CLOSING MEETING
SCOPE	A meeting between the auditor/ the auditing team and the management of the organization.	A series of interviews and other observations.	The auditor/the auditing team evaluate the findings at the end every audit day.	The result of the audit will be reported to the management of the organization.
EXPLANATION	> roles and responsibilities; > participants; > the audit agenda; > relevant logistic and security measures; > confirmation of confidentiality; > explanation of audit systematics.	The auditor works conform the audit agenda as much as possible. If there are derogations from the agenda, this is always discussed with the (audited) organization.	The auditor gives a short feedback about the results daily. Nonconformities will be reported right after the audit and you will be notified directly.	If nonconformities have been found, then these will be discussed and the way forward will be explained.

Identifying and resolving nonconformities

A nonconformity[4] is anything that deviates from a requirement in the standard and/or from the management system. DEKRA records any nonconformities in a factual report. If we identify any nonconformities, your organization must resolve them. You must analyze the cause of the nonconformity, including investigation of whether the improvement has eliminated the cause and whether it can be applied to other areas and processes within your organization.

Classification of nonconformities
Nonconformities are classed as a 'nonconformity' or 'serious nonconformity', depending on the extent to which the nonconformity poses a risk.

Nonconformities
A nonconformity means that the requirement is not entirely met. The deviation is demonstrably:

a. not systematic;
b. a stand-alone incident;
c. unlikely to lead to the failure of the management system.

In the case of a nonconformity, the organization must submit an improvement plan to DEKRA within 90 days of the end of the audit. DEKRA then checks the implementation of the improvement plan with six months of the end of the audit.

Serious nonconformities
A serious nonconformity means that the requirement is not met at all. The deviation is demonstrably linked to:

a. systematic failure of the management system;
b. situations that can lead to the breach of agreements (including with customers) or to non-compliance with legislation;
c. situations that can result in failure or limited availability of products or services, or can pose a risk to the environment, safety and/or health.

In the case of a serious nonconformity, the organization must:

- submit an improvement plan to DEKRA within 30 days of the end of the audit;
- identify and eliminate the causes within 90 days of the end of the audit and submit evidence of this to DEKRA for checking.

Dealing with nonconformities:
DEKRA must always check, assess and report on how a (serious) nonconformity has been resolved, by conducting either an administrative assessment of the measures taken or an extra on-site audit. Such an audit is also known as a 'corrective measures audit'.
If the requirements are not met, DEKRA has no option but to suspend the certification or to extend the period of suspension.

Suspension can also be imposed in the case of:

- Misuse of the certificate
- Lack of cooperation to conduct follow-up audits
- Repeated failure to submit details of corrective measures on time
- A request by the certificate holder
- In the case of suspension, DEKRA asks the organization to submit an improvement plan. DEKRA then decides whether to reactivate or revoke the certificate.

[4] Nonconformities involve extra work that cannot be estimated in advance. These costs are therefore not explicitly included in our proposal to you. Instead, the costs are calculated afterwards on a pro rata basis at the daily rate, with a minimum charge of one hour.

Flexible process set-up

On request, it may be possible to adapt the certification procedure in line with your specific situation providing we still comply with the rules that apply to DEKRA as a Notified Body. Besides that, it is possible that deviating rules are defined for certain standards, such as the deadlines for resolving nonconformities. Needless to say, if you have any questions you can always contact us.