




GUIDE FOR **LIFE** CERTIFICATION AUDIT

LIFE-IN-MP02-3.2-ENGLISH

Version 3.2 - International - English

(MAY/2018)

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OBJECTIVE

The objective of this procedure is to establish general rules for the execution of LIFE Certification Audits by Certifying Bodies.

APPLICATION

This document applies to Certifying Bodies accredited by the Life Institute, as well as to Organizations undergoing Auditing Process, and other stakeholders in the LIFE Certification.

APPROVAL

Document approved by LIFE Institute's Board of Directors.

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1 LIFE CERTIFICATION PROCESS

The LIFE Certification Process refers to objective, systematic, and documented evaluations of an Audited Organization, through evidences that provide proof that it complies with the criteria set out in the documents that make up the LIFE Methodology:

- LIFE Management Standards (LIFE-CS)
- Biodiversity Impact Index - BII (LIFE-TG01)
- Action Plan for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (APBE) - (LIFE-TG02)
- LIFE Reference Documents (RDs) applicable to companies in the country
- Management Procedures (MPs) related to LIFE Certification

The LIFE Certification audit is classified as a third-party audit, since it is an external and independent audit.

2 LIFE CERTIFICATION AUDIT HIRING

2.1 INITIAL CONTACT

The Audited Organization must contact a LIFE Certifying Body duly registered to operate LIFE System activities in the country.


2.2 HIRING OF THE CERTIFYING BODY

Once the terms of the contract have been agreed upon, the hiring will be made official according to the parties' internal technical and administrative procedures.

2.3 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

From the moment in which the Certifying Body is hired by the Audited Organization, it must start the Public Consultation of the LIFE Certification process.

This a consultation with the objective of enabling the stakeholders in the LIFE Certification process to manifest themselves to the Audited Organization.

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This process must be conducted until the start of the Phase II Audit (the Phase I and Phase II audits are explained on items 5.1.1 and 5.1.2).

Contributions from stakeholders should be used to identify relevant information related to the general requirements of the LIFE Certification, ensuring process validation, serving as further guidance for the evaluation of the auditor(s).


For Public Consultation, the Audited Organization should identify and inform the LIFE Certifying Body the stakeholders who may have, somehow, interest in relation to the LIFE Certification process to be carried out. The list must be evaluated and supplemented, when appropriate, by the LIFE Certifying Body.

The list of organizations or individuals should include at least the following players:

- a) Suppliers;
- b) Customers;
- c) Environmental Agencies;
- d) Surrounding Communities;
- e) Environmental Entities;
- f) Teaching and Research Institutions.

The Public Consultation should be carried out by electronic means or other means of communication and be available on the LIFE Certifying Body's website. An explanatory text should be made available regarding the intentions of the certification process, containing: brief history of the Audited Organization, location of the Business Unit(s) to be audited, and key commitments towards Biodiversity Conservation.

All comments received from stakeholders should be treated with confidentiality by part of the LIFE Certifying Body. The results of stakeholder Consultation will be informed to the Audited Organization through the Audit Report, in the most appropriate field depending on the subject addressed (Standards, BII or APBE).

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2.4 SYSTEM ACCESS

LIFE KEY WEB

Once the LIFE Certification Contract is signed, the Certifying Body must inform the Audited Organization to request the LIFE Institute to grant access to the LIFE Key Web System. The terms for the access and use of the tool will be informed directly from the LIFE Institute to the Audited Organization.

The objectives of the LIFE Key Web System include:


- ✓ Facilitate the analysis of the environmental management system, according to LIFE Methodology;
- ✓ Enter, maintain, and monitor quantitative environmental data;
- ✓ Calculate and monitor the Biodiversity Impact Index;
- ✓ Fulfill the minimum performance in Biodiversity for each unit, enterprise, or group;
- ✓ Evaluate the performance of the Action Plan for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (APBE) of the company or rural property;
- ✓ Issue Detailed Environmental Management Reports and Performance Executive Reports

2.4.1 LIFE Key Web System Structure

The LIFE Key Web System is a management tool developed by the LIFE Institute that includes the three Methodology modules:

- i) LIFE Management Standards:** evaluation of an organization's commitment towards environmental management and biodiversity conservation;
- ii) Biodiversity Impact Index (BII):** calculation of the impact of the organization's activities on biodiversity based on environmental aspect information (water and energy consumption, waste generation, footprint, and emission of greenhouse gases);
- iii) Action Plan for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (APBE):** evaluation, planning, and monitoring of the organization's positive performance in biodiversity and ecosystem services conservation actions.

The tool is structured in 3 Guides, namely:

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- **Support:** enables the performance of registration / modification / deletion of users and passwords, in addition to having a help menu for system use.
- **Evaluation:** enables the inclusion of information from the organization, such as register data, as well as information related to the three LIFE Methodology modules.
- **Reports:** enables the automated issuance of Detailed Reports and Executive Summaries from all LIFE Methodology Modules.

Additionally, it also allows key information to be exported to Excel.

The use of the tool is remotely done, i.e., from any computer with an Internet connection.

2.4.2 Filling of the LIFE Key Web System by the Audited Organization

The LIFE Certifying Body must request the Audited Organization to fill the LIFE Key Web Tool. This filling is mandatory and establishes the scope of the Certification Audit.


2.4.3 Auditor Access to the LIFE Key Web System

The Certifying Body will have access to the data as a reader, being able to comment on each one of the system modules (Standards, BII and APBE), in specific field (“auditor notes”). However, the auditor(s) is/are not allowed to edit any information added by the Audited Organization. However, the auditor(s) can request other relevant information, such as flowcharts and organization charts.

The Audited Organization must release and inform the user password in the “Certifying Body” category for temporary access of the auditor(s) to LIFE Key Web System data. This access should be released and informed within 30 days before the audit. Only after system access will the auditor(s) be able to perform a prior analysis of the data in order to prepare the Audit Plan.

It is the responsibility of the Certifying Body the use of this access, which can be managed together with its auditor(s).

After the closing of the audit, it is up to the Audited Organization to delete the user(s) temporarily released to the auditor(s).

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3 PROCEDURES ADOPTED IN AUDITS

3.1 MINIMUM COMPOSITION OF THE AUDITING TEAM

LIFE audits should be carried out by teams of qualified auditors according to internal requirements of the LIFE Certifying Body and ***with specific training for LIFE Certification***.

The teams must consist of at least two (02) auditors, wherein 01 (one) auditor has training and experience in environmental management and 01 (one) auditor has training and experience in biodiversity conservation. If the same auditor has both qualifications, he/she can perform the full audit, being the Certifying Body responsible for adjusting the time required in common agreement with the Audited Organization. The auditor(s) must necessarily have the Approval Certification relating to LIFE Certification Training.


The required number and specialization of the auditors to perform the audits may vary depending on aspects, such as size, type, and location of the Audited Organization, as well as the characteristics of Biodiversity Conservation Actions performed and/or supported by the said Organization, being the LIFE Certifying body responsible for identifying the needs and assembling the team. The qualification of the auditors should follow the recommendations contained in the ISO 19011 standard.

Eventually, the LIFE Certifying Body may recruit external experts to compose the auditing teams in order to assess specific questions. In this case, an expert does not act as an auditor, but provides the team with knowledge or experience. The auditor in biodiversity conservation may also fulfill the role of an expert, but the expert will only fulfill the role of the auditor if he/she has the required training.

Auditors in training can follow the team, under the supervision and responsibility of the Lead Auditor, provided the Audit Organization is informed in advance about his/her participation.

3.2 AUDIT SIZING

The sizing of LIFE Certification, Follow-Up, and Recertification Audits should be done based on the following documents: INMETRO NIT/DICOR 54 - Mandatory IAF Documents for the Application of the ABNT NBR ISO/IEC 17021-1, always in its latest version, in its specifications for environmental management systems.

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Follow-Up Audits cannot be sized with a time frame under 1/3 of the total time used in the Phase II Certification Audit.

Recertification Audits cannot be sized with a time frame under 2/3 of the total time used in the Phase II Certification Audit.

3.3 AUDIT PLAN

The LIFE Certifying Body should prepare and send the Audit Plan to the Audited Organization, considering the information obtained from the LIFE Key Web System:


- i) During Phase I (applicable when the certification process starts) or
- ii) Reports from the previous year (applicable when the organization already holds the LIFE Certificate).

The Audit Plan must contain at least the following information:

- a) Audit period;
- b) Auditor team;
- c) Lead Auditor;
- d) LIFE Methodology Documents and versions to be used;
- e) Audit schedule;
- f) Areas and key people to be audited, pre-agreed with the Organization;
- g) Most relevant field units to be visited;
- h) Minimum documents and information to be evaluated.

During the opening meeting, changes may be carried out, as long as they do not undermine the fulfillment of the audit's objectives.

The following activities are part of the *in-situ* Audit:

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3.4 OPENING MEETING


The opening meeting should be led by the Lead Auditor. All the components of the audit team and the responsible parties for the Audited Organization should be present. This meeting has the following objectives:

- a) Comment on the general results from the Phase I Audit or Audit from the previous year;
- b) Confirm the Audit Plan;
- c) Inform documents, versions, and tools used during the audit;
- d) Inform about the confidentiality agreement signed by the LIFE Certifying Body for the execution of audit;
- e) Explain the reasons why an audit can be terminated ahead of schedule: impossibility of having access to documents, information, and sites essential for the evaluation, etc.;
- f) Confirm the availability of basic resources (e.g.: own and third-party personnel to meet the auditors; transport; meals; personal protection equipment), which should have already been anticipated in the Audit Plan;
- g) Inform about the expected results, deadlines, and audit referrals.

3.5 CLOSING MEETING

The closing meeting, conducted by the Lead Auditor, has the objective of presenting the audit's findings and conclusions to the Audited Organization. The following are mandatory points to be mentioned at the closing meeting:

- Printing and delivery of the "Audit Report" for information monitoring;
- General review of the audit conducted: objective of the audit; auditor team; organization staff who accompanied the audit; areas assessed in the office and during field visits; staff interviewed; positive points noted by the team; points that will still need clarification, when available; points for future follow-up;
- Report on the general performance of the organization, based on the report delivered;

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- Consensus on the results;
- Signing of the report by the parties, in two copies, wherein one belongs to the Audited Organization and the other to the Certifying Body;
- Acknowledgments.

It is important to emphasize that the “Audit Report” must be printed at the last day of the audit and signed by the auditors and parties responsible for the audited organization.

The “Public Summary” must also be saved by the auditor in the last day of the audit, for later publication on the LIFE Certifying Body website.

This way ensuring that there was understanding and recognition by part of the audited organization about all findings presented, the LIFE Certifying Body must end the audit.

The signed “Audit Report” shall be forwarded to the Certifying Body for final approval and record, subject to review, upon communication and consensus with the Audited Organization.


4 TYPES OF AUDIT

Table 1 shows the types of Audit applicable to the Organization during the LIFE Certification cycle.

Table 1 - LIFE Certification Cycle

YEAR	AUDIT	TYPE OF AUDIT
0	1	Certification
1	2	1 st Follow-Up
2	3	2 nd Follow-Up
3	4	3 rd Follow-Up
4	5	4 th Follow-Up
5	6	Re-certification

The following is the description of the types of audits and the procedures that must be adopted for their execution.

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5 DEFINITION OF THE TYPES OF AUDITS AND PROCEDURES FOR THEIR EXECUTION

5.1 CERTIFICATION AUDIT

The Certification Audit refers to audits performed at the beginning of the Certification process.

It is conducted in the Year 0 (zero) and organized in 02 phases, as explained in the following items.

5.1.1 Phase I Certification Audit


This audit phase aims at preventing the Organization from undertaking long-term commitments before the opinion about the feasibility of fulfilling LIFE Certification's minimum requirements.

It consists of a prior and simplified audit. Its objective is to assess whether an Organization holds minimum conditions to be subjected to the full LIFE Certification process, as well as plan and size resources for Phase II (in case it is fit to do so).

Due to the Phase I Audit being basically an anticipatory stage of verification of data provided by the Audited Organization, it may be performed remotely. If necessary, the assessment may be completed by contacting the responsible manager in the Audited Organization.

During the Phase I Audit, the LIFE Certifying Body must check, through specific tool made available by the LIFE Institute (see item 2.4), whether the information made available by the Audited Organization is sufficient to act on the next steps, based on the fulfillment of the Modules: i) LIFE Management Standards; ii) Biodiversity Impact Index (BII); iii) Action Plan for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (APBE) (see item 6 - Table 2).

For cases in which the Organization already holds a LIFE Certificate, Phase I does not apply.

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IMPORTANT

- At the Phase I Certification Audit, the evidences are not confirmed by the auditors. It is only verified the existence of minimum required information and records, and their consistency.
- Therefore, the result of the Phase I Audit may be different from Phase II, due to the *in-situ* verification of the information by part of the auditors, at the Audited Organization.

5.1.2 Phase II Certification Audit


It consists of a full audit, conducted after the Phase I Audit. It has the objective of verifying whether the Audited Organization is fit to receive the LIFE Certification.

During the Phase II Audit, the LIFE Certifying Body must assess whether the Audited Organization meets the Modules: i) LIFE Management Standards: ii) Biodiversity Impact Index (BII); iii) Action Plan for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (APBE) (see item 6 - Table 2).

Having verified compliance with the requirements, the LIFE Certifying Body grants to the Audited Organization the LIFE Certificate, starting the Certification Cycle (Table 1).

In the Phase II Audit, unlike Phase I, the *in-situ* visit will be mandatory, both to the Organization's installations and Field Units that generate the score for the Action Plan for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (APBE). The LIFE Certifying Body must set the sampling of the Field Units to be visited, considering:

- a) Specifics of the Audited Organization and Biodiversity Conservation Actions carried out, considering their representation in the BCA_{undertaken};
- b) The size and relevance of the conserved and/or restored areas;
- c) Alternation of Field Units visited every year;
- d) Prioritization of the field visit to protected areas, when applicable;
- e) Random drawing of actions registered by the Audited Organization on APBE.

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IMPORTANT

- The unaudited *in-situ* Conservation Actions may be scored upon documented evidence, always based on the Guide for Evidence and Content Verification (GECV) from the Technical Guide 02 (LIFE-TG02)
- The non-compliance with the GECV may generate Improvement Requirements (RM) or Improvement Opportunities (OM), as appropriate. The full score of the action does not necessarily depend on the presentation of all the evidence and content listed on the GECV, since not all of them are applicable to all situations.
- In the case of a Holding in which Biodiversity Conservation Actions can be assigned to more than one Business Unit, the group must submit a document to the LIFE Certifying Body, defining which of the group's Business Unit(s) owe Biodiversity Conservation Action points.
- For cases of conservation actions carried out by third parties with the support by part of the Audit Organization, this will be responsible for providing in the Phase II Audit all required data on the score, ensuring the availability of all records. Thus, the Organizations Supported by the Audited Organization shall: a) provide required information concerning the actions under its responsibility; b) provide staff to accompany the Phase II Audit; c) provide the Certifying Body a Biodiversity Credit Statement (BCS) informing which actions are under its responsibility¹.
- LIFE Group Certification and LIFE Certification Scope: check the specific rules for this modality.

5.1.2.1 Referral - Phase II Certification Audit

In case Improvement Actions (AM) are issued, they will be part of the Audit Report, automatically generated, and these will be addressed until the first Follow-Up Audit, in which their fulfillment will be evaluated by the Certifying Body.

¹ Find more information on the item "Score Credits for Certification Purposes" in the Technical Guide 02 (LIFE-TG02).

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If the Audited Organization is not considered ready to be certified, the Improvement Requirements (RM) identified must be part of the Audit Report, with the respective deadlines for fulfillment. Once their fulfillment has been proven, the Certifying Body can issue the Certificate.

The deadline for fulfilling the Improvement Requirements, as well as the need for hiring a new audit (if there is one), must be negotiated directly with the Certifying Body.

5.2 FOLLOW-UP AUDIT

It consists of full audits, performed between the Phase II Certification Audit and the Recertification Audit. It has the objective of assessing if the Certified Organization is fit to maintain the LIFE Certificate.

It is held annually, in a period of up to 12 months from the LIFE Certificate issuance date in the Year 0 (zero), and so during 4 years, since on the fifth year the Recertification Audit takes place (Table 01).


During the Follow-Up Audit, the LIFE Certifying Body must assess whether the Audited Organization is meeting the Modules: i) LIFE Management Standards; ii) Biodiversity Impact Index (BII); iii) Action Plan for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (APBE) (see item 6 - Table 2).

Having verified compliance with the requirements, the LIFE Certifying Body maintains the Audited Organization's LIFE Certificate.

5.2.1 Referrals - Follow-Up Audit

Whether Improvement Actions (AM) are issued or maintained, they will be part of the Audit Report, automatically generated, and these will be addressed until the next Follow-Up Audit, in which their fulfillment will be evaluated by the Certifying Body.

If Improvement Requirements (RM) are detected during the audit, the LIFE Certificate can be maintained. However, the Audited Organization will have 90 days to address the improvements, from the date of signature of the Report, wherein the Audit Organization can request an extension upon justification forwarded to the Certifying Body, approved by the LIFE Institute.

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The Certifying Body shall notify the LIFE Institute about the status of the fulfillment within 10 days after the expiry of deadline agreed, for the maintenance of the Certificate.

If proof of fulfillment of the Improvement Requirements (RM) is not addressed in the agreed deadline, the certification will be temporarily suspended and the LIFE Institute will be informed, being the process resumed after the adequacy, by decision of the LIFE Certifying Body.

5.3 RECERTIFICATION AUDIT

It consists of a full audit, conducted after the last Follow-Up Audit. It has the objective of renewing the Audited Organization's LIFE Certification.

It is conducted every five years, counted from the date of issuance of the LIFE Certificate.

During the Recertification Audit, the LIFE Certifying Body must assess whether the Audited Organization meets the Modules: i) LIFE Management Standards: ii) Biodiversity Impact Index (BII); iii) Action Plan for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (APBE) (see item 6 - Table 2).


Having verified compliance with the requirements, the LIFE Certifying Body renews the Audited Organization's LIFE Certificate, restarting the Certification Cycle (Table 1).

5.4 VERIFICATION AUDIT

In cases of complaints, claims, accusations, or significant changes in the activities or the administration of the LIFE Certified Organization, or even in cases of need to further review, the LIFE Certifying Body or the LIFE Institute may exceptionally require Verification Audits, not provided for in the conventional audit schedule of the Certification Cycle (Table 01).

In cases of accusation or of changes in the business management, the Verification Audit will be mandatory. In cases the necessity is for a supplementary evaluation, the Verification Audit must be approved in advance by the evaluated Organization.

Any significant change in the LIFE Certified Organization must be communicated to the Certifying Body. In these cases, the Certifying Body will assess case by case the needs for a Verification Audit.

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Significant changes will be considered in the business management under the presence of the following situations: purchasing and selling of units that are included in the Certification’s scope; expansion of the activities that impact the BII in more than 20% in relation to the Certification Audit or the most recent audit; reduction of the APBE below the minimum established by LIFE Key Web (BCA_{minimum}); or extinction of the APBE. In these cases, the Verification Audit will only be required if the next Follow-Up audit is scheduled beyond 3 months after the occurrence(s).

6 FULFILLMENT OF LIFE MODULES

The LIFE Certification Process requires fulfillment of the 3 LIFE Methodology Modules. (i) LIFE Management Standards; ii) Biodiversity Impact Index (BII); iii) Action Plan for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (APBE), based on evidences and the correct filling of the LIFE Key Web system.

As each audit features specific characteristics related to this fulfillment, the LIFE Certifying Body must use Table 2 as reference for assessing the Audited Organization.



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Table 2 – Minimum Compliance with LIFE Methodology Modules during the LIFE Certification Cycle

Module	Requirement	Audit			
		Phase I Certification	Phase II Certification	Follow-Up	Re-certification
LIFE Standards (LIFE-CS)	Compliance with applicable General Indicators	70%*	70%*	100%	100%
	Compliance with applicable Essential Indicators	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Verification of information by the Auditors	Remote or in-person	In-person	In-person	In-person
Calculation of the Biodiversity Impact Index (BII) and Definition of Minimum Performance in Conservation Actions (LIFE-TG01)	BII	Record of environmental information: water consumption; waste generation; emissions of greenhouse gases; footprint; energy use. Data can be estimated.	BII calculated	BII updated	BII updated
	BCA _{minimum}	-	BCA _{minimum} calculated	BCA _{minimum} updated	BCA _{minimum} updated
	Assess information consistency for the organization's size and sector	X	X	X	X
	Verification of information by the Auditors	Remote or in-person	In-person	In-person	In-person

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Performance in Biodiversity Conservation Actions (LIFE-TG02)	Compliance with BCA_{minimum}	70% of BCA_{minimum} - or the guarantee of its conclusion in time for the Phase II Audit - Minimum of 30% in the Organization's Ecoregion.	70% of BCA_{minimum} - Minimum of 30% in the Organization's Ecoregion.	Between 70% and 100% - whereby the Audited Organization has to be alerted that the renewal of the contract (Recertification) will be subject to a result of 100%. Minimum of 30% in the Organization's Ecoregion.	100% of BCA_{minimum} Minimum of 30% in the Organization's Ecoregion.
	Action Plan for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (APBE)	Evidences of the existence of implemented environmental projects	Evidences of the implementation and/or formal planning of the scored projects	Evidences of the implementation and/or formal planning of the scored projects	Evidences of the implementation and/or formal planning of the scored projects
	Correct filling of the APBE	X	X	X	X
	$BCA_{\text{undertaken}}$	Advance score of the "APBE" Module for purposes of the estimating the $BCA_{\text{undertaken}}$	$BCA_{\text{undertaken}}$ calculated	$BCA_{\text{undertaken}}$ updated	$BCA_{\text{undertaken}}$ updated
	Verification of evidences - Guide for Evidence and Content Verification GECV (LIFE-TG02)	-	X	X	X
	Verification of information by the Auditors	Remote or in-person	In-person	In-person	In-person

* As long as it is ensured that there is no Principle and Criterion *fully not in compliance*, that is, "no" indicator complied with in the Principles and Criteria.

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IMPORTANT


- In addition to the documents LIFE-CS; LIFE-TG-01; LIFE-TG02, the applicable Reference Documents (RDs) must be considered, as well as those related to LIFE Certification.
- The LIFE Key Web System generates reports for the 3 Life Certification Modules and considers the compliance rules, not being necessary to calculate the percentages separately.
- Action Plan for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (APBE) is automatically generated by the LIFE Key Web System, as well as score distribution.
- The result of the Phase I Certification Audit will be directly generated by the LIFE Key Web System, in the “Phase I Report” field. This report contains information on the 3 Modules, and the information on APBE are contained on the Principle 03 and the basic information on the BII on the Principle 05.
- The results of the Phase II Audit, Follow-Up Audit and Recertification Audit are directly generated by the LIFE Key Web System, in the “Audit Report” field.

7 LIFE CERTIFICATE

The LIFE Certifying Body must request the LIFE Institute for the sequential number of the LIFE Certificate and make it available to the Audited Organization, according to LIFE Institute specifications.

It is the responsibility of the Certifying Body to submit the Certificate to the Audited Organization and to the LIFE Institute.

It is up to the LIFE Institute to provide and update the information on its website about the LIFE Certified Organizations and the Certifying Body responsible for the process.

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8 DOCUMENT VERSIONS

Although the LIFE Institute strives towards disclosing to all its stakeholders the release of new versions of the LIFE Certification Methodology, the Certifying Body is the direct responsible for informing its customer organizations.

From the publication, with each new Certification process, the Certifying Body has to use the new version of the documents, always available on the LIFE Institute's website.

For ongoing certifications, the Certifying Body must use the new version of the new documents in the first Follow-Up Audit after the release. If the change implies a non-compliance with any qualitative or quantitative aspect of the LIFE Certification Methodology by part of the Audited Organization, the Certifying Body must establish a period of one year for the Organization to adapt itself to the new condition.

9 REFERENCES

ISO/IEC 17021-1:2015 - Conformity assessment - Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems.

ISO 19011:2012 - Guidelines for Auditing Management Systems.