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System Description of the PEFC Forest Management Certification Scheme in Austria



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FOREWORD

PEFC Austria (PEFC: Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes) is a national organisation with the purpose of facilitating sustainable forest management through sustainable forest management certification and labelling of wood products. Consumers can trust that products carrying the PEFC label are made of raw material from sustainably managed forests, from recycling and/or non-controversial sources. PEFC Austria is a work group responsible for the standard setting and the administration of the Austrian PEFC scheme.

PEFC Austria standards are developed within an open and transparent procedure based on consensus and supported by consultation of a variety of stakeholders. Since 1999, PEFC Austria is full member of PEFC International whose strict endorsement procedure guarantees international recognition.

To improve the readability, the male form is used for all denominations of persons. It refers to all genders.

INTRODUCTION

The Austrian PEFC certification scheme is based on the guidelines defined in the Technical Documents of the PEFC Council (Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes Council), in its currently valid version.

PEFC Austria is a member of the PEFC Council and has obligated itself to continually improve its own national scheme. This includes revision of the system objectives in five-year intervals.

PEFC Austria is the control body for the national certification scheme. Its tasks are, in particular, to draw up and further develop the Austrian certification scheme and to set up an expert committee in the scope of group certification in natural regions.

The founding members of PEFC Austria represent the most important interest groups in the branches of forestry, wood processing, retailing, environment and social affairs. Further details on PEFC Austria can be found in the statutes of PEFC Austria.

1 SCOPE

1.1 This document provides information about the objectives, principles and structure of the PEFC scheme in Austria, in order to ensure good understanding of its parts and their interrelations.

1.2 This document is informative only. Mandatory requirements for bodies performing respective tasks of the scheme and relating processes are included in individual technical documents/standards of the scheme.

2 NORMATIVE REFERENCES

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

- ISO/IEC 17011 “Conformity assessment -- General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies“
- ISO/IEC Guide 59 “Code of good practice for standardisation“

- ISO/IEC 17021 Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of management systems”
- ISO/IEC 17065 “Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services”

All normative documents, forms and tools as well as procedural documents of the Austrian PEFC scheme are listed at the end of this system description (Appendix 2).

3 DEFINITIONS

Accreditation

A procedure by which a correspondingly authorized body formally recognizes that an organization or a person is competent to carry out specific tasks.

Accreditation Body

A body, which implements and manages an accreditation system and grants accreditation

Audit

Systematic, independent and documented process for compiling auditing evidence, and the objective evaluation thereof, in order to determine the extent to which the auditing criteria have been fulfilled (ÖNORM EN ISO 9000).

Audit report

Report of an audit

Auditor

Person, who is qualified to conduct audits

Certification

Acknowledgement by a third party concerning products, processes, systems or persons (ÖVE/ÖNORM EN ISO/IEC 17000)

Certification body

An independent third party, accredited by a national accreditation body, which evaluates and confirms organizations with respect to standards and any supplementary documentation required.

Conformity

Fulfilment of set requirements for a product, a process or a service.

Criteria

Aspects, which are considered important and which can be used to evaluate success or failure. The role of criteria is to define and characterize important elements or conditions and processes according to which the implementation of sustainable forest management can be evaluated.

Indicators

Quantitative, qualitative or descriptive parameters, which illustrate the direction of change, if they are measured or observed in periodical intervals.

Management Evaluation

Review of activities undertaken the previous year and significant events or changes in the achievement of objectives and on the results of internal audits by management in determining the possible need for change and opportunities for improvement.

On-Site Inspection

Inspection of the participating forest enterprises and the forestlands belonging to them.

PEFC Trademarks

The PEFC Trademarks are registered and must only be used according to PEFC ST 2001 PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements.

PEFC Certificate

Document issued by an independent certification body, which declares conformity with the PEFC requirements listed in this document.

Region

Area within clearly defined natural and administrative borders.

Requirement

Demand or expectation, which is stipulated, usually a precondition or an obligation (ÖNORM EN ISO 9000)

Sustainable Forest Management (SFM)

The stewardship and use of forests and forestland in a way and at a rate, which maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil now, and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions at local, national and global levels, and does not cause damage to other ecosystems (Definition of SFM in the Pan-European process). The PEFC-certified forests are certified in accordance with the six Pan-European criteria as defined and endorsed by the Pan-European Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests in Europe.

Third Party

Person or body that is recognized as being independent of the parties involved, with concern to the issue in question.

Note: Parties involved are usually the supplier (first party) and the purchaser (second party) (ISO/IEC Guide 2).

Unit (of Certification)

Region, group of enterprises or individual enterprise

Voluntary Declaration of Participation

A declaration signed by a forest owner, or the representative of a forestry alliance, in which this person obligates himself to fulfil the requirements made by PEFC.

All Documents of the Austrian PEFC scheme contain in the third chapter a list of definitions which are relevant for the interpretation of the corresponding document.

4 TARGETS

The present scheme describes PEFC scheme in Austria. Certification has the following targets:

- documenting and continuously improving sustainable forestry management
- improving the image of forestry management and its market partners
- promoting the use of wood, a renewable resource
- marketing of wood and wood products

- guaranteeing consumers and customers that PEFC-certified wood products originate from sustainably managed forests

5 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

5.1 Criteria and Indicators

The system's criteria and indicators are based on the six Helsinki criteria for sustainable forest management, the pan-European indicators for sustainable forest management, and the pan-European operational level guidelines for the sustainable forest management. On this basis concrete certification criteria have been defined, taking the specific national conditions and the legal situation in Austria into account (in particular the Austrian Constitution, Österreichisches Forstgesetz 1975 (Austrian Forest Law) in the current version, Jagdgesetze (Game Laws of the Federal States), Naturschutzgesetze (Federal State Laws on Nature Conservation), Forstliche Raumplanung (Forestal land use planning), Fischereigesetze (Federal State Laws on Fishing), Bodenrecht (Land Rights), Umweltverträglichkeitsprüfungsgesetz (Law for Environmental Compatibility Assessment), Denkmalschutzgesetz (Law for the Preservation of Sites of Historic Interest), Arbeitsverfassungsgesetz, Angestelltengesetz, Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch, Arbeiterkammergesetz, Landarbeitsgesetz, Mutterschutzgesetz, Väterkarenzgesetz, Arbeitszeitgesetz, Urlaubsgesetz, ArbeitnehmerInnenschutzgesetz and Gleichbehandlungsgesetz). The criteria include economic, ecological and social aspects of forest management.

Criteria and indicators for the evaluation of sustainable forest management in Austria are defined in the standard PEFC AT ST 1002.

5.2 Development and further development

The certification criteria will be developed by PEFC Austria with the input of all relevant interest groups. These relevant groups shall include interested parties in the fields of forestry, wood processing, paper production, trade, environment and social issues (e.g. trade unions). Their positions will be documented and considered in an open and transparent process. The criteria and indicators will be revised and improved at regular intervals on the basis of the latest scientific findings; continuous improvement is the goal. For the purpose of revision, independent experts will be called upon.

The development and further development is to be done according to the principles of transparency, independence, cost effectiveness and credibility while taking into consideration all of the interest.

5.3 Continuous Improvement Process (CIP)

Continuous improvement of forestry management is an important objective of PEFC certification.

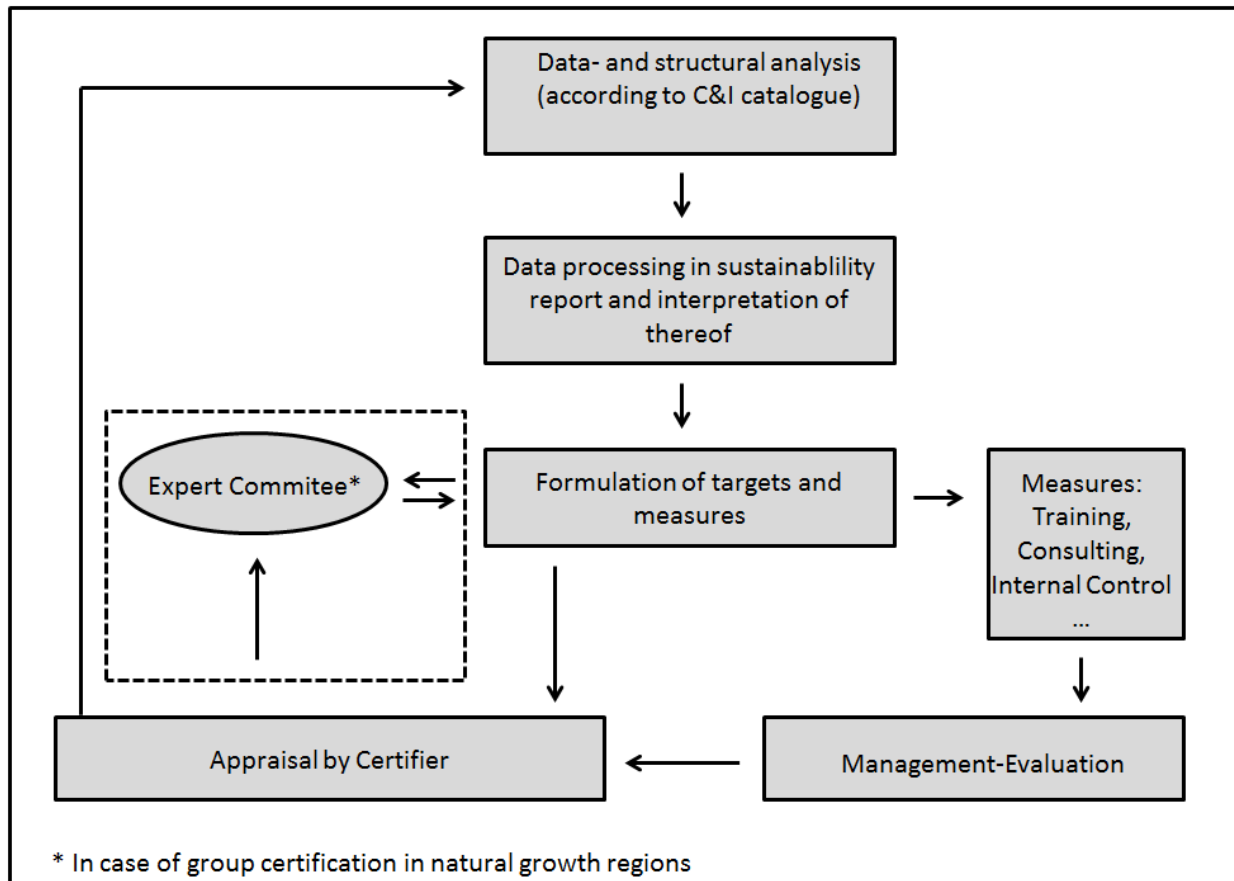


Figure 1: Continual Improvement Process (CIP)

An important factor of CIP is that re-audits will evaluate whether targets have been achieved, as well as that the effectiveness of the measures will be assessed internally by the annual management evaluation and externally through regular control measures. Feedback to PEFC Austria takes place via the expert committee, which is responsible for system-relevant issues of content. PEFC Austria compiles information and adapts its system objectives whenever necessary. The certificate holders are to be notified by the certification bodies of changes affecting them, and these certificate holders are to inform the participating forest owners. The process of revising the Technical Documents is initiated by PEFC Austria.

6 ACTORS

6.1 PEFC Austria

6.1.1 PEFC Austria is a work group which is supported by all essential parties in the fields of forestry, wood processing, paper production, trade, environment and social issues (e.g. trade unions). It was founded in 1999 and administers the PEFC scheme in Austria.

6.1.2 PEFC Austria is responsible for the following:

- a) Standard setting,
- b) representation of the scheme in the PEFC Council International,
- c) notification of certification bodies,
- d) licensing of the trademarks,
- e) service for the support of scheme implementation,
- f) training and information support,
- g) marketing, promotion, communication.

6.1.3 The working group system revision is responsible for drafting technical documents, as appropriate with the assistance of sub-working groups and in consultation of experts. The PEFC Austria secretariat is responsible for convening the working group. The working group is constituted by representatives of various interest groups, e.g. forestry, wood processing and –trade, environment and social-labour. At the beginning of every revision process, interest groups are mapped (stakeholder mapping) and invited to participate in the revision process, with particular consideration of disadvantaged, materially affected and key-interest groups.

6.1.4 PEFC Austria is not involved in the certification and accreditation process.

6.2 Certification Body

6.2.1 Independent certification bodies provide assessment of their clients' conformity with the standards of the Austrian PEFC scheme. They are not involved in the standard setting process of the PEFC scheme.

6.2.2 The Austrian PEFC scheme defines requirements for the structure, procedures and personnel of the certification bodies to ensure their impartiality and competence. They must be accredited by a national accreditation body to demonstrate their compliance with the PEFC scheme's requirements in Austria. Accredited certification bodies are notified by PEFC Austria.

6.3 Accreditation Body

6.3.1 Accreditation bodies provide assessment and surveillance of the certification bodies to ensure their impartiality and competence. Their work is based on ISO standards for conformity assessment. The accreditation body must meet the requirements of ISO 17011.

6.3.2 Accreditation bodies for forest management certification need to be members of the European Cooperation for Accreditation (EA) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).

6.3.3 For chain of custody certification, the accreditation body is a signatory of the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) for product certification.

6.4 PEFC-Regional Committee

The PEFC regional committee is a working group, which applies for forest management certification to a certification body. The working group is responsible for the implementation of the requirements for regional certification and represents the individual forest owners and forest cooperatives taking part in the forest management certification. When the requirements for sustainable forest management are met, the system relevant targets in the continuous improvement process are met and the certification process is completed successfully, the regional working group becomes a holder of a forest management certificate.

6.5 Participants in the PEFC forest-certification

Forest owners and forest cooperatives can voluntarily participate in the PEFC forest management certification by committing themselves to implement and comply with the forest management requirements and other requirements of the PEFC forest management certification.

6.6 Certified companies in the Chain of Custody certification

Wood processing companies along the whole value chain can get certified through a notified certification body. They obtain a Chain-of-Custody certificate and are registered in the international database: <http://www.pefc.org/find-certified/certified-certificates>

7 ADMINISTRATION

7.1 Preparation of technical documents

7.1.1 PEFC Austria regularly checks whether it is necessary to make changes and continually improve the certification scheme (i.e. for the consideration of new scientific findings). This includes, if required, the inspection and revision of the corresponding normative documents, amongst others the PEFC AT ST 1001 (PEFC-Standard for Sustainable Forest Management in Austria), which must take place no later than in five years intervals. The national certification scheme is regularly evaluated on the basis of this analysis and improved upon, if necessary. The expertise of external scientists and other experts will flow into this process of revision.

7.1.2 The standard setting process is based on PEFC AT PB 4001 and ISO Guide 59 and organised by PEFC Austria. Standard setting is conducted through participation of diverse stakeholder groups. It is an open, transparent, multi-stakeholder based process and shall aim for consensus among all participants.

7.1.3 The process includes the mapping of stakeholders, the public announcement of the start of the standard setting process, an invitation of stakeholders to forming technical committees, public consultations, formal approval by the General Assembly of PEFC Austria and the publication of the standards.

7.1.4 The standards are subject to revisions every five years.

7.1.5 All standards are publicly available through the website of PEFC Austria.

7.2 Certification

7.2.1 Forest management certification

Forest management certification provides assessment of forest management with PEFC AT ST 1001 and PEFC AT ST 1002 and in case of group certification with PEFC AT ST 1003. Requirements for certification bodies for forest management certification are defined in PEFC AT ST 1004, including the appendices. Based on the situation in Austria, there are three options of forest management certification:

- (1) Group certification in natural growth regions (PEFC AT ST 1004, Appendix 3),
- (2) Individual certification (PEFC AT ST 1004, Appendix 5) and
- (3) Group certification in general (PEFC AT ST 1004, Appendix 4).

Based on similar processes and requirements, the individual and the group certification are treated together in following chapters.

7.2.1.1 Group certification in natural regions

Group certification in natural regions constitutes a group forest management certification wherein natural growth regions are considered regarding target-setting and implementing measures.

For the purpose of group certification in natural regions, ecologic-geographical regions were defined in Austria on the basis of natural and administrative borders (see PEFC AT ST 1003, Appendix 2: Split into natural growth regions).

Requirements for group forest management certification in natural growth regions are defined in PEFC AT ST 1003, including Appendix 1.

Application for certification is made through the regional committee, which represents forest owners and other interest groups in the region. The forestry representatives in regional committees represent at least 50% of the forest area in the region. The individual forest owners in the region can participate in group certification in natural regions on a voluntary basis by signing the Voluntary Declaration of Participation. They can also participate through a forestry cooperative.

The forest owners may terminate their participation at any point in time. Only the timber of participating forest enterprises in the region is considered "PEFC-certified," and it may be labelled with the PEFC-Label after conclusion of a trademarks usage contract with PEFC Austria according to the valid rules for use of the trademarks.

Group certification in natural regions is considered particularly appropriate for certifying sustainable forestry in Austria for the following reasons:

7.2.1.1.1 Non-discrimination

Austria's forests are managed by around 145.000 forest owners and forest enterprises. The general requirements of individual forest management certification would put small forest owners and family forest enterprises as a disadvantage in terms of costs. The significance of data on the regional level makes it possible for small forest owners to take part in forest management certification at a reasonable cost.

7.2.1.1.2 Data reliability and transparency

In Austria a number of monitoring systems exist, which provide a comprehensive picture of the state of the forests. This allows conclusions as to how forests are being managed. The data are collected at regular intervals, but they are only significant for larger units. Thus, their applicability at the level of individual enterprises is limited. For certification a solid and transparent data basis is the major factor. In the case of individual owners of small forests, sufficient data are not available.

7.2.1.1.3 Regional management

Efficient and professional consulting plays a decisive role in regional forestry management. Especially at local and regional levels, there is considerable economic, ecological and social interest in sustainable forestry management.

7.2.1.2 Individual certification and group certification in general

A forest owner can apply for his individual forest enterprise to be certified based on individual certification, or a group of forest owners can apply for certification as a group. Requirements for group forest management certification are defined in PEFC AT ST 1003.

7.2.2 Chain-of-Custody Certification

7.2.2.1 Chain of custody certification enables enterprises of the supply chain between certified forests and the final product to make claims on the origin of the raw material in PEFC certified, sustainably managed forests and delivers confidence to their customers that those claims are truthful and accurate.

7.2.2.2 PEFC Austria has adopted, without any modification, the PEFC international chain of custody standard with the reference number PEFC ST 2002 as a part of the Austrian PEFC scheme.

7.2.2.3 The chain of custody certification for the purposes of using PEFC claims and the PEFC label is carried out against PEFC ST 2002 and its Appendix 1. The chain of custody certification is a precondition for on-product usage of the PEFC label.

7.2.2.4 The chain of custody certification includes, as its integral and indispensable part, the assessment of the Due Diligence System aiming at the minimisation of risk that the used raw material originates from controversial sources.

7.2.2.5 The chain of custody certification includes as its integral and indispensable part, the assessment of the requirements for workers' rights and occupational health and safety.

7.2.2.6 Organisations with multiple sites and groups of independent producers may implement the chain of custody as a multisite organisation following Appendix 2 of PEFC ST 2002.

7.2.2.7 The chain of custody certification is carried out by a certification body that is notified by PEFC Austria following ISO 17065 and PEFC ST 2003.

7.3 Accreditation

7.3.1 Accreditation for Forest Management Certification

7.3.1.1 Accreditation of certification bodies operating forest management certification provides confidence on impartiality and competence of the certification bodies. The accreditation body provides initial assessment as well as regular surveillance of the certification bodies. The accreditation body's activities are governed by ISO 17011 and relevant documents of the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).

7.3.1.2 PEFC Austria recognises accreditations issued by an accreditation body against ISO 17021 and PEFC AT ST 1004 and cover in their scope the relevant standards of the Austrian PEFC scheme relating to forest management certification (PEFC AT ST 1001, PEFC AT ST 1003).

7.3.1.3 The accreditation body is independent of certification bodies as well as of PEFC Austria. The accreditation body is a member of the European co-operation for Accreditation (EA).

7.3.2 Accreditation for Chain of Custody Certification

7.3.2.1 Accreditation of certification bodies operating chain of custody certification provides confidence on impartiality and competence of the certification bodies. Accreditation bodies provide initial assessment as well as regular surveillance of the certification bodies. The accreditation body's activities are governed by ISO 17011 and relevant documents of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF).

7.3.2.2 PEFC Austria recognises accreditations issued by an accreditation body which is a signatory of the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) for product certification of IAF or member of EA (European co-operation for Accreditation). The accreditation shall be issued

against ISO/IEC 17065 and the scope of the accreditation shall explicitly include PEFC ST 2002.

7.4 Notification

7.4.1 The notification is a formal recognition of a certification body by PEFC Austria to operate forest management and/ or chain of custody certification against the Austrian PEFC scheme in Austria. The notification allows the certification body to issue certificates that are recognised by PEFC Austria and upon the PEFC endorsement of the scheme also by the PEFC Council.

7.4.2 The notification is based and dependent on the recognised and valid accreditation of the certification body and does not include assessment or surveillance of the certification body which is exclusively provided within the accreditation process.

7.4.3 The notification process is governed by PEFC AT PB 4003 and may include a notification fee paid by the certification body to PEFC Austria based on fees defined in PEFC AT 4005.

7.5 Trademarks Usage

7.5.1 PEFC Trademarks

7.5.1.1 The entities registered in Austria have access to the usage of the PEFC trademarks following PEFC ST 2001 upon

- a) the membership of PEFC Austria in the PEFC Council,
- b) a contract on the administration of the PEFC scheme between PEFC Austria and the PEFC Council,
- c) the endorsement of the Austrian PEFC scheme by the PEFC Council.

7.5.1.2 The PEFC trademarks are registered and the usage is only permitted by a license issued by PEFC Austria following PEFC AT PB 4002.

7.5.1.3 The use of the trademarks is stipulated according to the "PEFC Trademarks Rules" (PEFC ST 2001 PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements). These rules are mandatory. A German translation of the document has been adopted by PEFC Austria without modifications as PEFC ST 2001.

7.5.1.4 The usage of the PEFC label on- or off-product is a mechanism for the communication of the certification status of an organisation or its products. The usage of the PEFC label by forest enterprises and entities of the subsequent chain of custody is conditioned by a recognised forest management or chain of custody certificate.

7.5.1.5 The PEFC label can also be used off-product by an entity for communication and promotion purposes according to the specifications in PEFC ST 2001, chapter 7.3.

7.6 Dispute settlement

7.6.1 In principle, accredited certification bodies and accreditation bodies shall set up procedures for arbitration, in order to be able to settle all complaints made by PEFC certificate holders brought against the certification body.

7.6.2 PEFC Austria has established a process for complaints and disputes which are not under the competency of the certification or accreditation bodies, comprising:

- a) complaints regarding the standard setting process

- b) administrative procedures of PEFC Austria, for example notification and issuance of trademarks licences

This procedure is regulated in PEFC AT PB 4004.

7.6.3 Group organisations for forest management certification need to establish their own procedures for dealing with complaints and disputes under the competency, comprising:

- a) the participation in the group certification
- b) the compliance with the requirements of sustainable forest management.

A guideline for the establishment of corresponding arbitration procedures is PEFC AT RL 3004.

7.6.4 The certification process and its results are covered by the complaint procedures of the relevant certification body following the relevant accreditation documents, ISO 17021 or ISO 17065.

7.6.5 The accreditation process and its results are covered by the complaint procedures of the relevant accreditation body following ISO 17011 or by complaints procedures of the International Accreditation Forum (www.iaf.nu).

Appendix 1 Document structure of PEFC Austria

Document type		Identification	Approved by	Status	Principles of development
System Description			PEFC Austria GA	Informative	Members consultation
Standards (normative documents)	PEFC AT	PEFC AT ST 100x	PEFC Austria GA	Mandatory	PEFC AT PB 4001
	PEFC Council	PEFC AT ST 200x	PEFC Austria GA	Mandatory	Developed by PEFC Council, adopted by PEFC AT after Members Consultation
Guidance Document		PEFC AT RL 300x	PEFC Austria GA	Informative	Members Consultation
Procedural Documents		PEFC AT PB 400x	PEFC Austria GA	Mandatory	Members Consultation

Appendix 2 Documents of PEFC Austria

Document type	Document title	Document name	Appendices
System Description	PEFC AT 0001	System Description of the PEFC Forest management certification Scheme in Austria	Document structure
			Documents PEFC Austria
			Structure of the PEFC scheme in Austria
Standards PEFC Austria	PEFC AT ST 1001	PEFC-Standard for Sustainable Forest Management in Austria	Requirements for the use of forestry machinery
			PEFC AT ST 1002
	PEFC AT ST 1003	Group Forest Management Certifications according to the PEFC-System in Austria - Requirements	Requirements for the group certification in natural growth regions
			Split into natural growth regions
			PEFC AT ST 1004
		Requirements for accreditation of certification bodies operating forest management certification	
		Requirements for notification of certification bodies operating forest management certification	
		Specific requirements for the group certification in natural growth regions	
		Specific requirements for the group certification in general	
		Specific Requirements for individual certification	

International Standards (adopted by PEFC Austria)	PEFC ST 2001	PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements	
	PEFC ST 2002	Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products – Requirements	Specification of the PEFC claims
			Implementation of the chain of custody standard by multisite organisations
	PEFC ST 2003	Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard	Accreditations accepted by the PEFC Council
			Specification of the PEFC claims
			Multi-site chain of custody certification
Guidelines	PEFC AT RL 3001	PEFC Declaration of Participation - Forest Owners and Forest Cooperative	
	PEFC AT RL 3002	PEFC Confirmation of Participation for Forest Owners and Forest Cooperatives	
	PEFC AT RL 3003	Checklist for Internal Audits	
	PEFC AT RL 3004	Complaint Procedure and Rules of Arbitration for Group Organisations	
	PEFC GD 2001	Chain of Custody of Forest and Tree Based Products and Related Standards – Guidance for use	
Process-Descriptions	PEFC AT PB 4001	Standard Setting Process - Requirements	
	PEFC AT PB 4002	Issuance of PEFC Trademarks Usage Licenses	
	PEFC AT PB 4003	Notification of Certification Bodies	
	PEFC AT PB 4004	Complaint Procedure and Rules of Arbitration	
	PEFC AT PB 4005	Schedule of Fees	
	PEFC AT PB 4006	Endorsement of Control Systems for Forest Entrepreneurs	

PEFC AT PB 4007	Transition to the revised PEFC Austria scheme 2017
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Note: This is the list of the technical documents of PEFC Austria that are valid and available at the time of the publication of this document. A current list and current versions of all technical documents are available at: www.pefc.at

Appendix 3 Structure of the PEFC scheme in Austria

