ECQA Guideline[1]

The Architecture of the ECQA – European Certification and Qualification Association

Version 5.0 (2013)

Krems, May 2013

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[1] The former rework of the guideline version 3 for ECQA was funded by the DEUCert LLP project

European Certification &
Qualification Association

1. ECQA White Paper : Europe wide Industry Certification Using Standard Procedures based on ISO 17024

Abstract:

ECQA (European Certification and Qualification Association) is the result of a series of EU funded projects from 2005 – 2012. This included European projects such as EQN (European Quality Network, 2005 – 2007), EU Certificates Campus (2008 – 2009) and DEUCERT (Dissemination of EU Certification), the ECQA nowadays acts as an organization that is independent from funding. The members of ECQA are widely spread all over Europe and vary from universities to companies as well as individuals.

ECQA is aimed at a demographic problem of education and training in the European Union. For people at 40 – 50 it is many years ago that they attended the university and required skills nowadays are changing every 2-3 years. This means that their skills get outdated and we experience in Europe a growing unemployment from the age of 45 upwards. Universities in Europe are currently not addressing this problem.

EQN developed a so called role based qualification concept where e.g. an existing software engineer (who studied informatics some 15 years ago) can identify job roles to upgrade so that he remains a value for the organization. He might receive additional industry qualification for e.g. a safety architect (additionally learning how to enrich existing software architecture with functional safety aspects). This way the person, would for instance, grow into a safety architect position and a younger person who knows more about new programming techniques gets his old position. EQN then developed certification mechanisms for this role based approach for university and industry educational partnerships.

EU Cert Campus collected about 15 job roles, structured the corresponding skills sets and established online services. The online services comprise skills browsing, skills assessment, and online training. So people from industry can attend job role based qualification training from the work place.

DEUCERT   established ambassadors for this new job role based qualification concept Europe and worldwide. DEUCERT also helped to create a critical mass of partners. At the moment we do have 26 job professions (ready and in progress) that are certified all over Europe and already outside of the European Union. The concept is meanwhile supported by approx. 60 universities and training bodies in Europe.

Human resource managers from leading multinational companies called ECQA "a success story" because so far the universities in Europe do not address the mentioned demographic problem and ECQA has already achieved more than 11000 online trainings and more than 6600 certificates in European industry and at university PhD programs.

The processes of the ECQA are mapped onto the ISO 17024 international standard for the certification of persons.

The PAC project will integrate further skills sets and certification options into the ECQA platform.

Keywords: European qualification standards, European certification strategy, European exam systems, European learning portals.

Introduction

While university programs address people in the age of 19 – 26 they do not address the demographic problem of increasing unemployment for people older than 45 at all. We already experience in nearly all countries in the European Union the growing age of people and in parallel that the number of unemployed people older than 50 is increasing as well. This can lead to a high demographic risk because most economies also plan to increase the age of pension and this will not work if people do not stay employed with the growing age.

The project EQN [3],[4],[5] was a strategic network project in education in which industry and educational institutions from 13 countries did networking to propose a solution to this demographic problem. Also the project should deliver an initiative of innovation in education as well [6],[8].

This resulted in:

Job Role Based Qualification Strategies [5],[7]. While the universities teach for a domain (e.g. informatics engineer) the job role based qualifications are short courses which in 2-3 weeks re-qualify people in industry (access from the workplace) to sustain their value for the company and remain employed. Job roles are described in form of skills sets (similar to the skill cards in the Department of Trade and Industry in the UK), and skill sets are mapped onto training, exercises and tests.

If someone studies informatics engineer this takes approx. 5 years at a university. Assuming this as a basis a job role qualification is for instance to upgrade to a safety architect, software process improvement manager, etc.

Modular Certification. It was also assumed that people in industry at the work place are under time pressure and cannot do the whole training at once. They might do a part in year 1 and the rest in the next year. They (assuming the European mobility strategy) could do the first part from Spain the rest from a German work place.

Thus the skills sets were structured into skill elements and each skill element has so called performance criteria. Each certificate lists elements and a full certificate is achieved if all elements are passed.

European Mobility Strategy. If, for instance, in the current economic situation Spanish workers would move to Germany for employment and later would move to UK and then back to Spain, all certifications should be added up and accepted across all countries.

This led to the concept of so called lifelong learning accounts for people. Each person in Europe can register at the system and in one lifelong learning account (like an international bank account but for education) can do self assessment, achieve skills profiles, and receive training. The account sustains and is a central service across EU countries.

This infrastructure was later established in the EU Cert campus project.

Europe Wide Standardized Approach. To be able to roil out this strategy in all countries the design of standard guidelines was important. They were translated in all major European languages.

As a result of this the ECQA [3],[4],[5],[9],[10] has established a set of standard quality guidelines for

- Certification of a new job role
- Certification of training bodies
- Certification of trainers
- Certification of people

See www.ecqa.org and cooperation with ECQA under guidelines.

A **job role committee** is an international working group who signed the standard ECQA JRC agreement and annually maintain the skill card and test questions pool.

Attendees of courses do an ECQA based exam and receive an ECQA Certificate.

In the guidelines of ECQA the fulfillment of the ISO 17024 standard for certifications of persons has been considered. A mapping to this international standard can be found in the ECQA guidelines.

This standard process requires that training organizations and examiners are separated. ECQA supports that by

1.   Establishing a Europe wide exam system which generates tests randomly per person (each person gets a different test and cannot be controlled by the training body). The exam questions are assigned to skills elements of job roles.

2.   Using certified exam bodies who provide examiners to organize the exams.

3.   Automatic corrections through the ECQA test system so that none can interfere the tests and the results personally.

4.   Job Role Committees elaborate and annually update this pool of multiple choice test questions.

EUROPEAN WIDE INFRASTRUCTURE

To support the concept of lifelong learning accounts (a strategy developed in the EQN project) the EU Cert Campus project (above 20 partners from 18 countries) developed an infrastructure which supports standard procedures for lifelong account management, self ass4essment of skills, exams and administration of certificates [2],[4],[5],[9].

Once this infrastructure was developed and in place (now used by above 11000 professionals and managers in European industry) it was important to find a body maintaining these services. This resulted in the legal foundation of the ECQA (European Certification and Qualification Association, 2008).

ECQA is not for profit and the income model is based on the certification business. ECQA follows the processes of independent exams as outlined in ISO 17024 and earns a share of each certificate sold. The income is used to further maintain the lifelong learning accounts and exams infrastructure.

The members of ECQA (and owners) are more than 60 universities and training bodies from Europe.

The Notion of Skills Profiles. The future vision of EQN was that each person in Europe might have an educational card like a bank card. On the chip we store the skills profiles of the person. This strategy was called "skills-card" strategy for Europe. The original strategy stems from the EU funded FP project CREDIT, 1998 – 2011, where ISCN was the partner for the technical architecture.

In EQN and EU Cert this strategy was adapted to a skills profile online which a person can maintain in a private lifelong learning account. Instead of a physical skill card with a chip on the cards, there are now lifelong learning online accounts.

A skills profile (= skill card as designed by the EU project CREDIT) is a representation of the coverage of competencies of a person in different skills elements. Each job role contains skills elements, the coverage of skills is shown in form of a percent mark.

  Exam results Illustrating the Coverage of Skills Profiles. Exam results are displayed in the form of a skills profile, demonstrating the coverage per skills element. See Figure 1. To be certified you must reach 66% in each skills area.

Figure 1: Typical Profile as Result of an Exam

The exam system portals are continuously updated and new functions to guarantee stability of the system during exams is extended since more than 6 years now.

A SPACE FOR EUROPEAN LIFE LONG LEARNING

Once the ECQA [2] was founded and the exam procedures were in place the next problem to solve was to allow a smooth integration of a critical mass of LLP projects into the platform. The EU LLP program finances a few hundred VET projects per year. The strategy was to empower a selected set of these projects to structure the skills and learning results into ECQA standards and integrate them into the platform.

Knowledge and Learning Cluster for IT and Services. The partnership of ECQA decided that we cannot accept every LLP project or new job role. Firstly, they must satisfy the ECQA standards and quality criteria and secondly they should relate to a specific cluster. So it was decided that in the first years of rollout (2008 – 2014) we especially support the sector of IT and services.

Some of the universities who are ECQA members decided to not use the multiple choice tests but to extend the system to support the **APL (Accreditation of Prior Learning) procedures** in the industry-university partnerships for education.

Thus a further new developed software function is the **assessment of prior learning function**. Here a panel of advisers (assessor of skills) can review existing knowledge of a person and assess a specific skills element to be fulfilled. In this case the exam is only to be done for skills elements where the assessment did not show coverage of the skills.

The ECQA platform allows people from the work place to attend online skills portals, receive training, do exams, and receive a certification [3],[4],[5],[9].
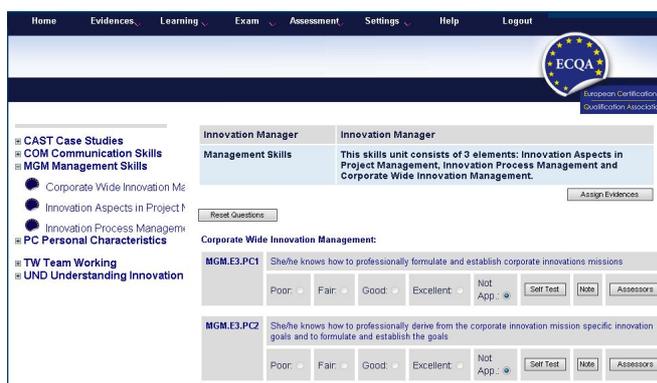

Figure 2: Skills Browsing and Self Assessment

With one login people can register for one or more job roles. When they register for the job role they can browse the skills and do a self assessment.

The self assessment highlights in which areas the learner needs to fill some skills gaps. In these areas the system allows to connect to an e-learning system.

Figure 3: Integrated E-Learning Courses

The courses include multimedia lectures, learners notes, exercises and online discussions of the exercises.

The skill card structure defines units (competence areas), learning elements (learning objectives), and performance criteria (what the learner must be able to demonstrate). The learning approach is therefore "learning by doing" based and thus task based leaning is a method which ECQA supports.
 Once the training has been performed the learner can register for an exam. The exam is computer generated, and will be corrected automatically. Exams are random generated and different per learner. Questions are generated from a Europe wide shared test questions pool.
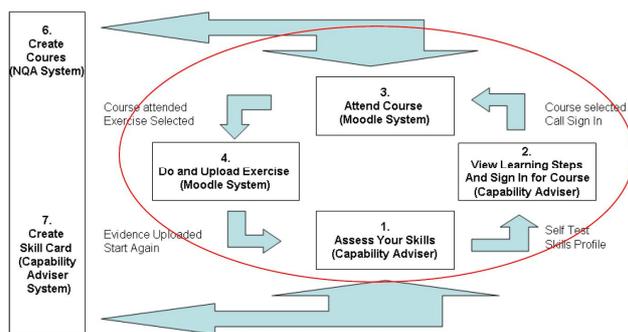The implemented learning approach is described in Figure 4.

Figure 4: ECQA based integrated learning cycle

Figure 5: ECQA – Multiple Choice Based Exams

EUROPEAN DIMENSION and OUTLOOK

The current economic situation in Europe clearly illustrates that the demographic problem outlined in the abstract of the paper is a realistic scenario. The awareness that universities have a social responsibility to also think about solutions about how to upgrade skills of people older than 45 is increasing but still nearly non existing Europe wide. They still just focus on young people aged 19 – 26.

The concepts developed in EQN (2005 – 2007) and implemented with ECQA (as a not for profit initiative) represent a possible solution to this problem. This growing awareness leads to a growth and more and more universities and training bodies are expected to join.

The growth of the ECQA initiative is shown in Figure 6 where we see the growth trend of managers in Europe that have been ECQA certified after attending an ECQA test.

Training Bodies comprise universities, commercial training companies, chambers of commerce who became active providers of ECQA certified courses.

The described demographic situation is the major driver for growth in ECQA. Also by the number of many thousand certified people and their connections with other people in Europe we expect a wave of growing interest.

Also the number of LLP funded projects applying ECQA guidelines is currently increasing per year.

If you also plan to join this initiative please contact the ECQA president, Prof. Michael Reiner, University of Applied Sciences, Krems, Austria, Email: michael.reiner@fh-krems.ac.at.
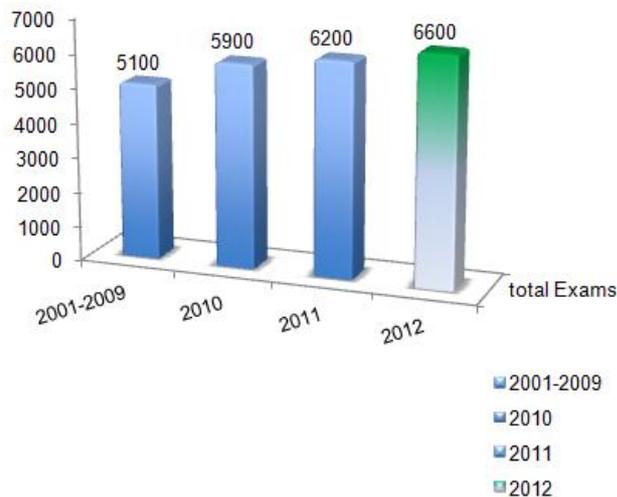
total Exams

Figure 6: ECQA –Growth Trend of Exams in Europe

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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[10] ISO 17024, International Standardisation Organisation, Standard for the Certification of Persons

2   The Architecture of the ECQA – European Certification and Qualification Association

ECQA has been founded in 2009 as Not-for-Profit Organisation, registered as association under Austrian law. ECQA acts as independent certification unit and issues the certificates.

The following chapters describe (1) the general set of roles and responsibilities involved, (2) the legal framework, and (3) the business flows to be managed by the association.

2.1.   Role Based Architecture of ECQA

The ECQA architecture is described by role based process models. The following roles have been grouped by areas of activities.

User Area
- Learner

ECQA Specific Areas

Testing system
- Exam and Certification Portal
- Test Server Administrator

Management
- ECQA Members
- ECQA Board

Committees
- Job Role Committee

Training Area
- ECQA Certified Training Organisation
- ECQA Certified Trainer

Examination Area
- Exam and Certification Organisation
- ECQA Certified Assessor
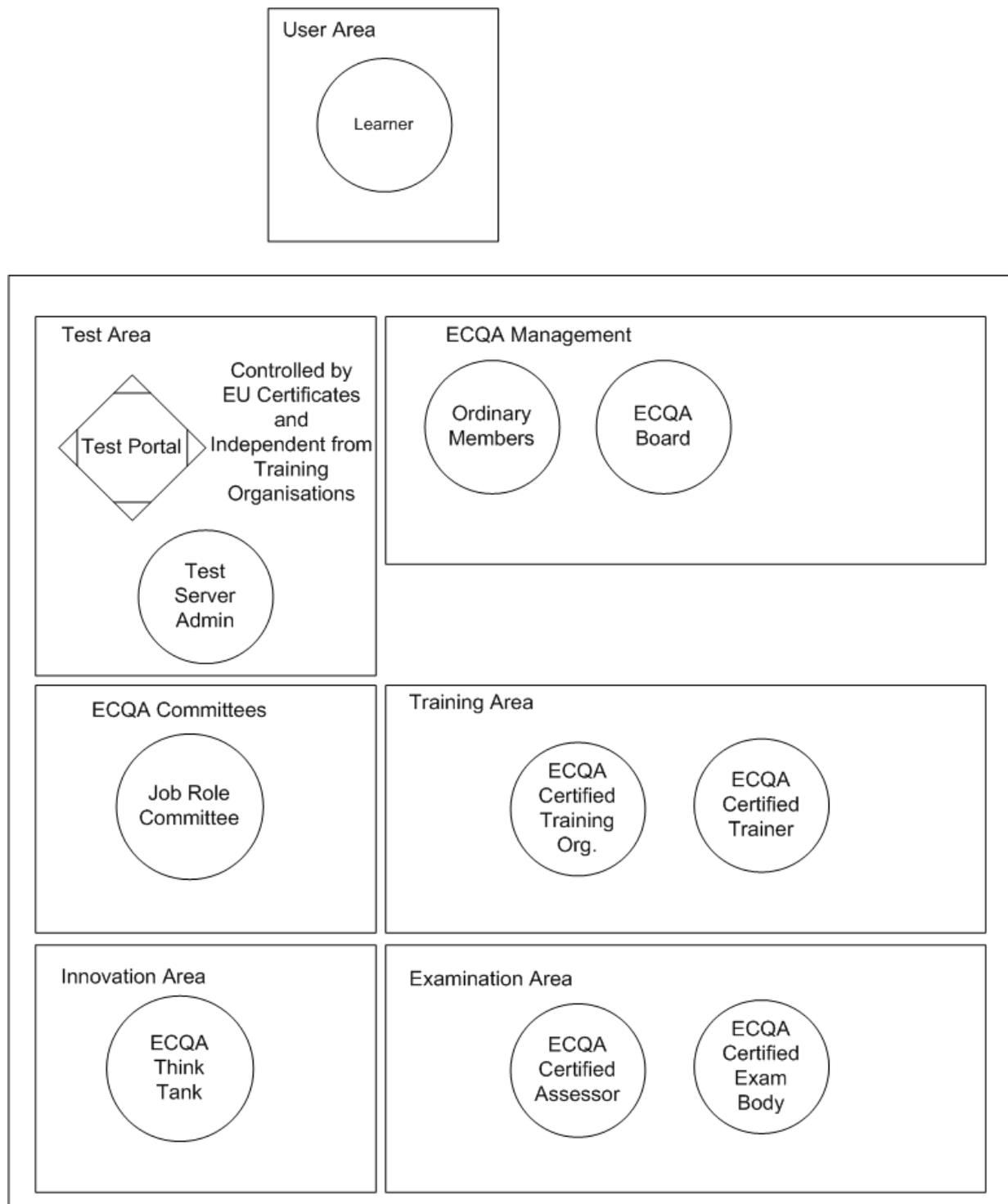
Innovation Area
- ECQA Think Tank

Figure 1: Role based architecture of ECQA

Based on this architecture responsibilities for roles and role based work flows have been designed.

Please note that a one person / organisation can play many roles at the same time. Here we describe roles and not functions!

2.2.　Description and Responsibilities of each Role

User Area

− **Learner**
  General Description:
  A learner can be a student or an employee who wants to upgrade the skills to fulfil a specific job role. Learners will register at the learning portals, perform self assessments, attend courses, perform tests, and receive certificates.

  Responsibilities:
  - Perform self assessment online to check if and which training course is needed to prepare for the exam (www.ecqa.org , menu bar "Learning Portals");
  - If needed, attend online courses or vocational face-to-face trainings;
  - Perform a test to qualify for a chosen ECQA certified job role (see exam guides at (www.ecqa.org, menu bar "Certification and Examination");
  - Pay for the certificate issued by ECQA, signed by the ECQA president and recognised by all ECQA members;
  - Sign code of ECQA professional ethics
  - Perform re-certification

ECQA Specific Areas

Testing system

− **Exam and Certification Portal Administrator**
  General Description:
  The test systems and certification portals can manage mutliple tests at the same time. The portals have been used so far by thousands of learners and can manage learners administration, test management and automatic generation of certificates. Tests are multiple choice based.

  Responsibilities of the portal administrator:
  - Provide guidance to learners on how to perform tests (www.ecqa.org, menu bar "Examination and Certification").
  - Provide guidance to exam and certification organisations on how to prepare, perform a test and generate certificates.
  - Maintain services by investment into security, availability, and stability.
  - Further releases in half annual cycles, to be financed by association income and/or related other initiatives.

− **Test Server Administrator**
  General Description:

A test server administrator will be available to help examination and certification organisations to run the tests (in case of questions). The test server admin will be available at testing times to ensure smooth running of tests.

Responsibilities:
- Update and send out the exam guides to exam and certification organisations.
- Update and make available the exam guides to learners.
- Maintain the testing servers.
- Be available at testing times to react as a hotline in case of problems.
- Note: The times of tests must be reported to the test server administrator to ensure availability of the test server admin.

ECQA Management

– ECQA Members

General Description:
Members of the ECQA Association are organisations committed to the ECQA concept of a common European test and certification system to be applied in many countries with the same processes and quality criteria. ECQA members shall become
- ECQA job role committee member (active participation in at least one job role committee) or / and
- ECQA certified training organisation (active in training for one of the ECQA job roles).

Responsibilities:
- Become an active member of the association, committed to the quality standards of ECQA.
- Contribute 10 full working days (80 hours) per year to the tasks of a job role committee. This work related contribution elates to the contribution to the job role committees and / or exam questions development.
- Participate in the ECQA annual general assembly (or provide a proxy to an ECQA member present at the general assembly).
- Participate in a job role committee or / and act as ECQA certified training body.

– ECQA Board

General Description:
The ECQA executive board (see § 11 of the ECQA statutes) consists of five members, i.e. the chairperson (president) and his or her two deputies (1st and 2nd Vice President), the secretary and the treasurer.
The chairperson functions as business director (secretary), the Vice Presidents function as technical director and as director for processes and business development.
The board will make strategic decisions about ECQA (certification, innovation, quality, branding, corporate identity and corporate wording (including internationalisation and language policies), marketing and sales strategies, etc.)

Responsibilities:
- Meet in tele-conferences at a regular basis (minimum twice a year).
- Agree on ECQA strategies impacting all ECQA job roles.
- Decisions require a simple majority. In the case of a parity of votes, the vote of the chairman shall decide the issue.

- Present and discuss ECQA board decisions to and with all job role committees.
- Implement final decisions agreed on by job role committees by simple majority.
- Prepare ECQA General Assemblies (see: ECQA statutes below, 2.6.2 The Legal Statutes of the Association)
- Monitor ECQA Think Tank.

ECQA Committees

– **Job Role Committee**
   General Description:
   The job role committee (JRC) consists of ECQA members who commit their work (10 full working days minimum) to safeguard the quality standards of ECQA processes, training materials, exam questions and skill card for a specific job role in annual releases.

   Responsibilities:
- Establish a virtual task force (through Office 365, Citrix GotoMeeting or other means) to have quarter annual meetings to coordinate the work on the annual update of the skill card. Meeting minutes shall be made available at the ECQA sharepoint platform.
- Select reviewers of new proposals from training organisations to be certified.
   (See chapter »Rules and Process Steps for Certification of Training Organisations and Trainers«)
- Evaluate the proposals of new training bodies to be certified for a specific profession.
- Review proposals of trainers to become ECQA certified trainers for the specific job role.
   (See chapter »Rules and Process Steps for Certification of Training Organisations and Trainers«)
- Nominate JRC representatives
- Suggest guests for the ECQA Think Tink.

ECQA Training Area

– **ECQA Certified Training Organisation**
   General Description:
   An ECQA certified training organisation fulfils all criteria of ECQA certified training organisations (see chapter 2) and offers ECQA certified courses. The training organisation is certified for each specific job role separately. Training organisations are committed to cover the defined sills card and to use the agreed European exam system on all attendees. Each training organisation shall have at least 1 (one) ECQA certified trainer per specrific ECQA course.

   Responsibilities:
- Fulfil all criteria of an ECQA certified training organisation. See chapter »Rules and Process Steps for Certification of Training Organisations and Trainers«
- Pay an annual certification fee to the ECQA Associaton to be nominated and published as an ECQA certified training organisation.
- Publish training plans on a regular basis in cooperation with an ECQA job role committe to allow ECQA to disseminate information about training opportunites (which courses are offered when, by whom and where?).
- Perform ECQA certified courses.

- Use the ECQA test system.
- Sign a code of ethics
- Promote the ECQA brand

– **Certified Trainer**
  General Description:
  > An ECQA certified trainer fulfils all criteria of trainer certification (see chapter »Rules and Process Steps for Certification of Training Organisations and Trainers«) and offers courses. The trainer is certified for each specific ECQA job role separately.

  Responsibilities:
  - Fulfil all criteria of an ECQA certified trainer.
  - Pay an annual trainer certification fee to the ECQA Associaton to be nominated and published as an certified trainer.
  - Establish an annual training plan in collaboration with the training body / organisation to allow ECQA to disseminate information about training opportunites (which courses are offered when, by whom and where?).
  - Performing courses.
  - Using the test system.
  - Sign a code of ethics
  - Promote the ECQA brand

ECQA Examination Area

– **Examination and Certification Organisation**
  General Description:
  An examination and certificiation organisation maintains an organisation account in the ECQA testing system. Their learners register for a test and the exam body prepares, manages, and runs the test. Once the test is completed the exam body sends the registration list to the ECQA management. ECQA then issues the certificates.

  Responsibilities:
  - Apply the examination and certificiation organisation guide (provided by the role »test administrator«) to prepare, manage, and run a test.
  - Forward the list with registered examinees to the ECQA management.

– **Certified Assessor**
  General Description:
  The test and exam portals support also the role of an assessor. Here learners who passed the test can collect real life application experience in their learning account and get the experiences assessed. This way they will receive (after the assessment) a professional certificate.

  Responsibilities:
  - Apply the assessment guide (provided by the test administrator) to prepare, manage, and perform experiences assessments.
  - Forward the list with registered examinees to the ECQA management.

ECQA Innovation Area

ECQA Think Tank

General Description: The ECQA Think Tank will consist of representatives of ECQA job role committees (elected by the respective job role committees themselves) and external guests invited by the ECQA Board.

Responsibilities:
- Create a framework and processes for creativity and innovation (including exnovation) within ECQA.
- Establish and monitor an error culture and a culture of dissent.
- Implement and safeguard the principle of diversity within ECQA:
    - ✓ balance between ECQA members (universities, companies, multipliers)
    - ✓ mix of age, gender and cultural/etnical/ethical backgrounds of ECQA representatives
    - ✓ heterogenous teams (disciplines, age, gender, nationalities, etc.) in job role committees
- Award the »ECQA Maverick of the Year« to outstanding thinkers within the ECQA Community

2.3.   Business Flow Models

In the ECQA there are different business flows to be managed. They include:

1. Learner Certificate Related Flow
2. Training Certification Related Flow
3. Job Role Committee Related Flow
4. Training Material License Flow
5. Contracted Certification Body Related Flow

2.3.1. Learner Certificate Related Flow

The business flow is based on the following principles:
In the ECQA there are different business flows to be managed. They include:

6. Learner Certificate Related Flow
7. Training Certification Related Flow
8. Job Role Committee Related Flow
9. Training Material License Flow
10. Contracted Certification Body Related Flow

2.3.2. Learner Certificate Related Flow

The business flow is based on the following principles:

- The learners attend a test at a exam organisation.

- The examination and certification organisation manages and runs the test. The learners receive an exam result online. The examination and certification organisation informs the ECQA to issue certificates.
- The certificates are printed and signed by the president of the ECQA. The certificates are sent by post to the training organisation and hand them out to the learners/participants.
- The exams are invoiced by the ECQA.
- 70% of the certificate income stay in the association to finance the administration and the test server support. 30% of the certificate income are refunded to the examination and certification organisation which managed the exam on the front end. A minimum of 75 Euro per Exam has to be transferred to the ECQA no matter what the price of the exam at the exam organisation was.
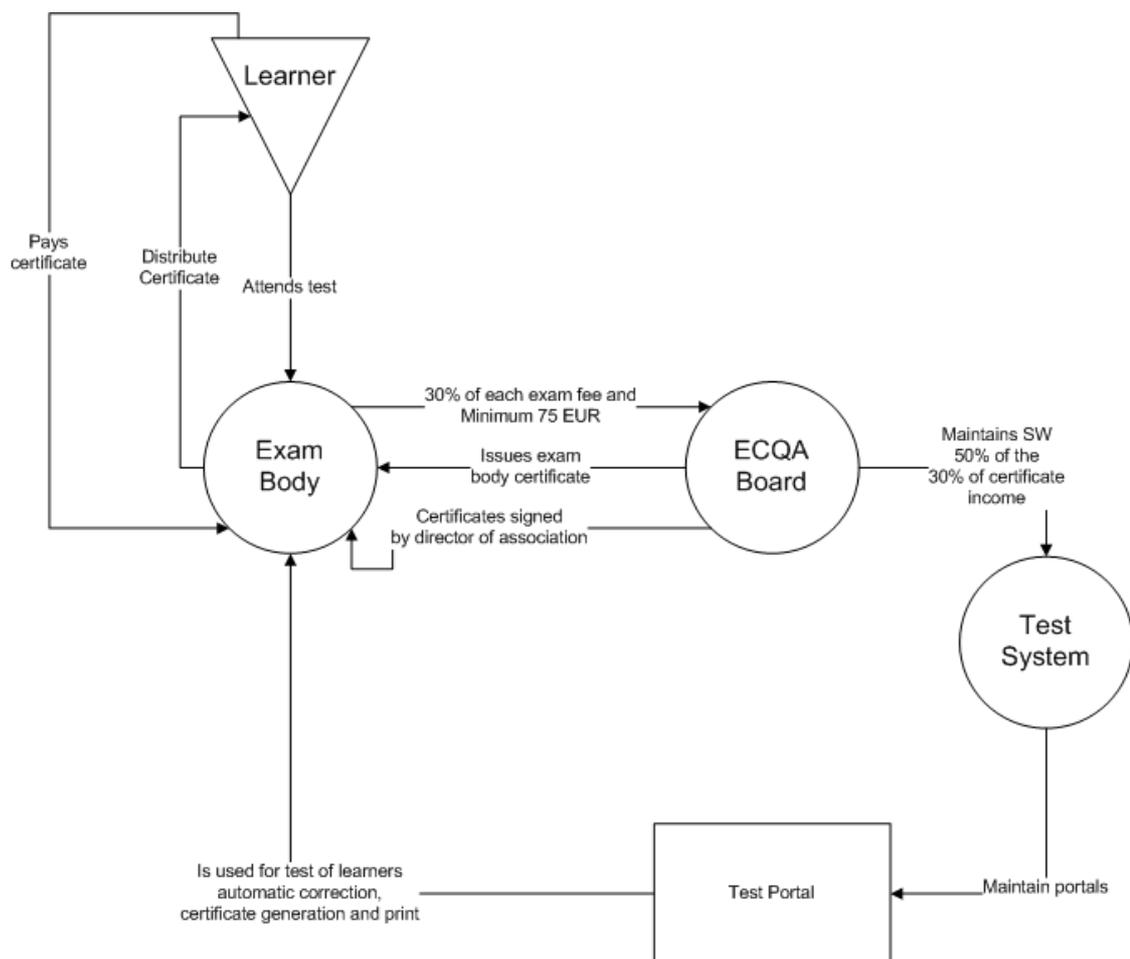

Figure 2: Exam Related Flow

2.3.3. Training Organisation and Trainer Certification Related Flow

The business flow is based on the following principles:

− The training / examination and certification organisation pays an annual certification fee to be named and listed as one of the training providers and to receive support through the exam and learning portal systems.
− The job role committee agrees on a minimum pricing model (minimum cost for a trainee per course and country).
− The pricing scheme only applies for open public courses, in-house courses can be offered without this price regulation
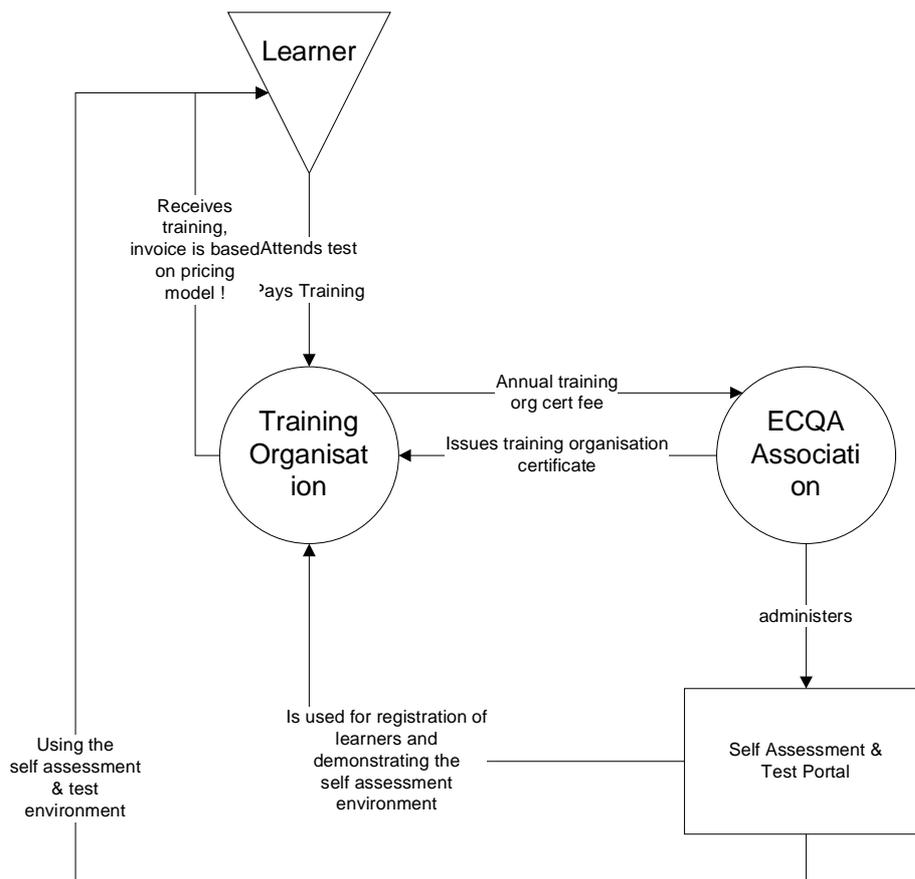

Figure 3: Training Certification Related Flow

2.3.4. Training Organisation and Trainer Certification Related Prices

Training organisations have the choice between two kinds of annual services:

Option 1: Basic package

Training organization: fee per year

Trainer: fee per trainer and per year

Services: Listing on ECQA website

Option 2: Additional package

Training organization: fee per year

Trainer: fee per trainer and per year

Services:

- Promotion and listing of the training organization with contact details and current trainings
- Promotion and listing for trainers with contact details and current trainings

2.3.5. Job Role Committee Based Flow

The business flow is based on the following principles:
- The association members commit themselves (instead of contributing a financial fee annually) to 10 man days work per year.
  Note: Job Role Committee members can also be Exam Committee members at the same time.
- The effort is used for
  o An annual update of the skill card
  o An annual update of the test questions
  o Reviews of new proposals of training firms which want to be certified.
- Effort is being reported to the ECQA board to be able to properly distribute the work load.
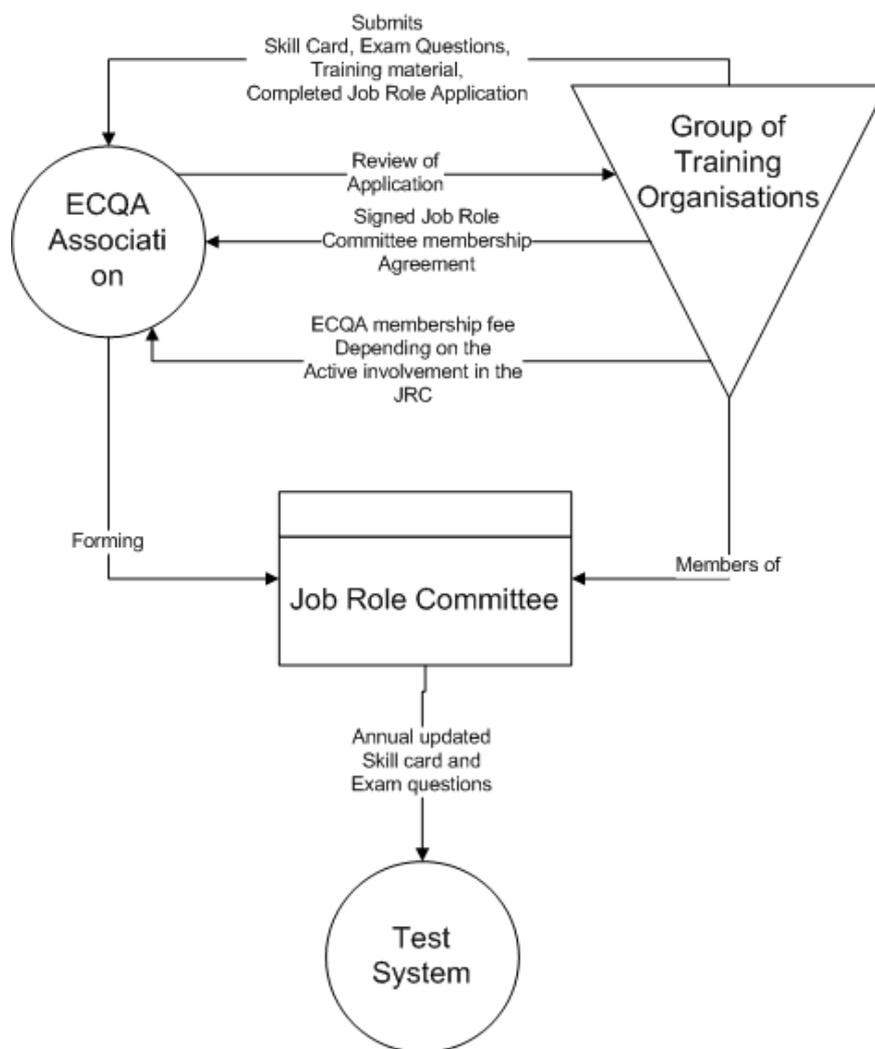
Figure 4: Job Role Committee Related Flow

Business Case Example:

See the business case example for the Training Organisation and Trainer Certification Related Flow. Here income for the Job Role Committees is generated.

2.4.   Training Material License Flow

The business flow is based on the following principles:
- A training organisation / consortium developed updated / new training materials for a specific job role. They offer this material to the association.
- The job role committee needs to agree a price which is to be applied.
- The ECQA will offer the materials for an agreed price to other training organisation.
- License agreements will be signed between the association and the training organisation.
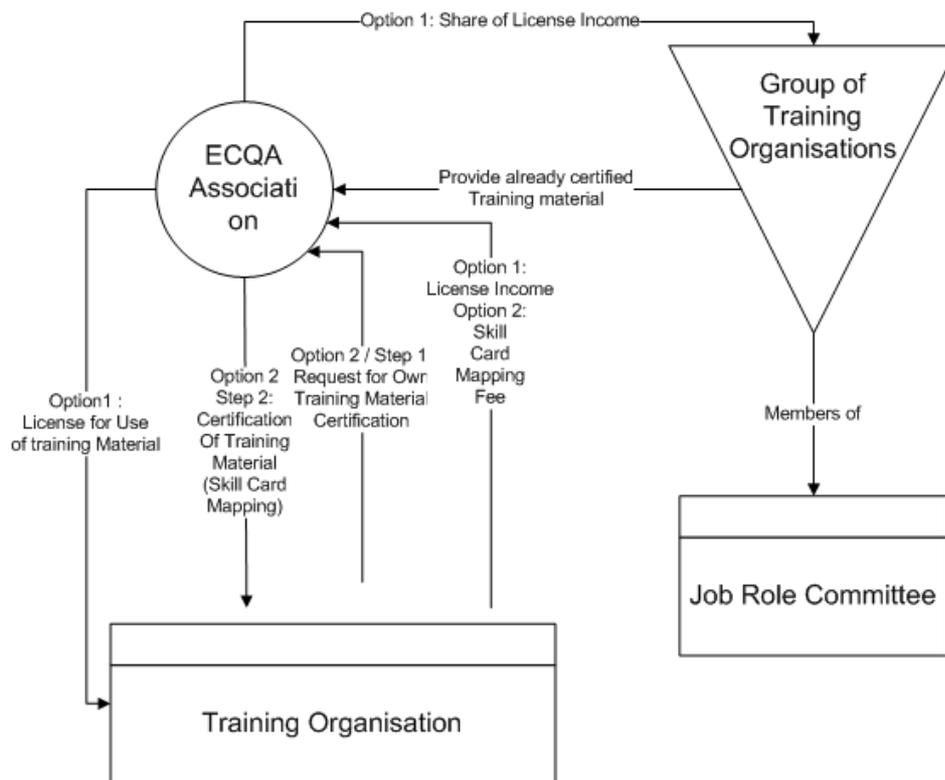
Figure 5: Training Material License Flow

2.5. The contractual Framework

2.5.1. Framework Contract Templates

The ECQA provides a set of standard framework contracts for:

o Training organisation contract between the ECQA and the training organisation.
o Job Role Committee and Exam Body Memorandum Agreement to ensure that all members and the ECQA have the same understanding of tasks and responsibilities for both sides.
o Proposed template for a trainer contract to be signed between the training organisation and the trainer.
o Template contract with certification bodies

2.5.2. The Legal Statutes of the Association

The ECQA is founded as an association under Austria law, headquartered in Krems at the IMC University of Applied Sciences (http://www.fh-krems.ac.at/en/) and technically maintained by ISCN, the organisation which developed the technical system architecture (www.iscn.com).

The current version of the ECQA statutes has been translated (from German to English) by an EN 15038 certified translation service provider in March 2013.

STATUTES

of ECQA

§ 1
NAME, HEAD OFFICE AND ACTIVITIES

(1)   The Association's name is „ECQA".
2   The Association has its principal place of business in Krems/Donau and operates throughout Austria.
(3)   It is (not) intended to establish branch associations.

§ 2
PURPOSE

() The Association, whose activities are of a non-profit nature, has the following purposes:

The accreditation and administration of job profiles, training organisations, trainers and examiners valid throughout the EU. The aim is to develop standardised job profiles for worldwide use by unifying training programmes. The Association's purpose is to develop job profiles and to promote their international application. To that end, the Association shall be supported by training organisations (for training trainers) and certification partners (for granting training certificates to trainees) as well as by international universities (cooperation). The Association's activities shall directly serve scientific, research and teaching purposes.

§ 3
MEANS TO ACHIEVE THE ASSOCIATION'S PURPOSES

(1)   The Association's purposes are to be achieved by the intangible and tangible resources referred to in paragraphs 2 and 3.
(2)   <u>Intangible Resources</u>
        a)   Presentations, meetings, social gatherings, training, hikes, discussion evenings

(3)   <u>Tangible Resources</u>
        a)   Subscriptions, Membership Fees
        b)   Income from events, internal activities of the Association
        c)   Donations, collections, legacies, other contributions
        d)   Contributions from training organisations (which train the developed profiles)
        e)   Contributions from certification partners (which issue certificates)

§ 4
CLASSES OF MEMBERSHIP

(1)   The Association has full, supporting and honorary members.
(2)   Full members are members that are involved in the Association's activities.
        Supporting members are members that support the Association's activities mainly by paying an increased membership fee.
        Honorary members are persons that are appointed honorary members on account of their special merits for the Association.

§ 5
ACQUISITION OF MEMBERSHIP

(1)   All physical and legal persons can become members of the Association.
(2)   The Executive Board decides on the admission of full and supporting members. It can reject applications for admission without reason.
3   Honorary members are appointed by the general meeting at the request of the executive board.
(4)   Before the Association is constituted, members are provisionally admitted by the founding member(s). Membership will not be effective before the Association is constituted.

§ 6
LOSS OF MEMBERSHIP

(1)   Membership expires in the event of the member's death, in the case of a legal person in the event of loss of its legal personality, withdrawal and exclusion.
(2)   A member can withdraw from the Association only on the 31st of December of each year. The executive board must be notified of his or her withdrawal in writing at least one month in advance. In the case of late notification, it does not become effective before the next withdrawal date, the date of posting being relevant for the timeliness of such notification.
(3)   The executive board may exclude a member if he or she is in arrears with membership fees despite having been requested twice in writing to pay them. This shall not affect the member's obligation to pay any membership fees due.
(4)   The executive board may exclude a member from the Association also in the case of a gross negligent violation of other obligations of membership by the member and if the member is guilty of dishonourable conduct.
(5)   The general meeting can suspend honorary membership at the request of the executive board for any of the reasons stated in par. 4.

§ 7
RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE MEMBERS

(1)   The members are entitled to take part in all events of the Association and to use the Association's facilities. Only ordinary members and honorary members are entitled to vote at the general meeting and to vote and stand for appointment.
2   The members will use their best efforts to promote the interests of the Association and to omit everything that could damage the reputation and purpose of the Association. They undertake to comply with the statutes of the Association and with the resolutions passed by its bodies. The full and supporting members are obliged to timely pay the entrance fee and the membership fees at the amount determined by the general meeting.

§ 8
BODIES OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Association has the following bodies: general meeting (§§ 9 and 10), the executive board (§§ 11 to 13), the auditors (§ 14) and the Association's conciliation panel (§ 15).

§ 9
THE GENERAL MEETING

(1)   The ordinary general meeting is held once a year.
(2)   An extraordinary general meeting is held within four weeks upon decision of the executive board, the ordinary general meeting or upon a written and reasoned application of at least one tenth of the members entitled to vote (§ 7(1) and § 9(6)) or at the request of the Auditors.
(3)   All members must be invited in writing to both the ordinary and the extraordinary general meetings at least two weeks before the meeting. The members shall be invited to the general meeting by notice in writing which shall state the agenda of the meeting. The general meeting is convened by the executive board.
(4)   Applications to the general meeting shall be submitted in writing to the executive board at least three days before the date on which it is held.

(5)   Valid resolutions – except resolutions passed on a request that an extraordinary general meeting be convened – may only be passed on the agenda.

(6)   All members are entitled to take part in the general meeting. Only the full members and honorary members are entitled to vote. Each member shall have one vote. Legal entities are represented by an agent. The voting right may be delegated to another member by written authorisation.

(7)   The general meeting is quorate if half of all members entitled to vote or their proxies (par. 6) are present. If the general meeting is not quorate at the scheduled hour, it will be held 30 minutes later with the same agenda and considered quorate irrespective of the number of the persons appearing.

(8)   Elections and resolutions at the general meeting are normally passed with a simple majority. Resolutions by which the Statutes of the Association are amended or the Association is dissolved may be passed only with a qualified majority of two thirds of the votes cast.

(9)   The general meeting is chaired by its chairperson, or, if he or she is prevented from attending the meeting, by its deputy. If also the deputy is prevented from attending the meeting, it shall be chaired by the oldest member of the executive board present.

§ 10
SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GENERAL MEETING

The following tasks are reserved for the general meeting:
a)   Receipt and approval of the audit report and the annual accounts;
b)   Resolution on the budget;
c)   Election, appointment and removal of members of the executive board and the auditors; approval of transactions entered into by members of the executive board and auditors with the Association;
d)   Giving discharge to the executive board;
e)   Determination of the amount of the entrance fee and the membership fees for full members and supporting members;
f)   Conferring and withdrawing honorary membership;
g)   Adopting resolutions on amendments to the statutes of the Association and the voluntary dissolution of the Association;
h)   Consultation and resolution on other items on the agenda.

§ 11
THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

(1)   The executive board consists of five members, i.e. the chairperson and his or her two deputies, the secretary and the treasurer.

(2)   The executive board is appointed by the general meeting. In the event of withdrawal or removal of an appointed member, the executive board shall be entitled to co-opt another member eligible for election, for which it shall obtain subsequent approval from the next general meeting. If the executive board is not available at all or if it suspends its activities for a period of unforeseeable duration, each auditor shall immediately call an extraordinary general meeting for electing a new executive board. If the auditors are incapacitated or if there are no auditors available, each full member aware of the emergency situation shall immediately request the competent court to appoint a curator who shall promptly convene an extraordinary general meeting.

(3)   The executive board's term of office expires after three years. Its appointment shall be renewable.

(4)   The executive board is called in writing or orally by its chair, or if he or she is prevented from doing so by his/her deputy. If also the deputy is prevented from calling the executive board for a period of unforeseeable duration, each other executive board member may call the executive board.

(5)   The executive board is quorate if all its members have been invited and at least half of them are present.

(6)   The executive board passes its resolutions with a simple majority. In the case of a parity of votes, the vote of the chairman shall decide the issue.

(7)   It is chaired by its chairperson, or, if he or she is prevented from doing so, by his or her deputy. If also the deputy is prevented from chairing the executive board, it shall be chaired by the oldest member of the executive board present.

(8)   Apart from death and expiry of his or her term of office (para. 3), the function of an executive board member expires upon his or her removal (para. 9) and his or her resignation (par. 10).

9   The general meeting may remove the entire executive board or individual members of the executive board from office at any time, such removal becoming effective upon appointment of the new executive board or executive board member.

10   Members of the executive board may hand in their resignation at any time. The letter of resignation must be sent to executive board; if the entire executive board resigns from office, their letters of resignation must be addressed to the general meeting, such resignation not becoming effective before the appointment and/or co-opting (par. 2) of a successor.

§ 12
SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The executive board is responsible for the management of the Association. It has all responsibilities that are not assigned to another body of the Association by the Statutes. Most notably, the following matters fall within its sphere of responsibility:

a)   Preparation of the annual budget and the audit report;
b)   Preparation of the general meeting;
c)   Convocation of ordinary and extraordinary general meetings;
d)   Administration of the Association's assets;
e) Admission and exclusion of members of the Association;
f)   Hiring of and giving notice to employees of the Association.

§ 13
SPECIAL OBLIGATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

(1)   The chairperson shall represent the Association externally. Written declarations of the Association must be signed by the chairperson and secretary, in financial matters (financial transactions) by the chair and the treasurer. Legal transactions between executive board members and the Association must be approved by the general meeting to be valid.

(2)   Any authorisation to externally represent the Association and/or to sign on its behalf may be exclusively granted by the officers referred to in par. 1.

(3)   In the event of imminent danger, the chair shall be entitled to make provisional orders also in matters falling within the scope of responsibilities of the general meeting or the executive board, such orders requiring the subsequent approval by the Association's appropriate body.

(4)   The general meeting and the executive board are chaired by the chairperson.

(5)   The secretary shall assist the chairperson in the management of the Association's business. He or she shall be responsible for drawing up the minutes of the general meeting and the executive board.

(6)   The treasurer is in charge of the Association's proper financial management.

(7)   If the chairperson, the secretary and the treasurer are prevented from performing their tasks, they shall be performed by their deputies.

§ 14
THE AUDITORS

(1) Two auditors are appointed by the general meeting for the term of office of the executive board. Their appointment shall be renewable.

(2)   The auditors are responsible for checking the Association's current business management and for auditing the Association's annual accounts. They shall report on the result of the audit at the general meeting.

(3)   § 11(3), (8), (9) and (10), and § 13(1) last sentence apply accordingly to auditors.

§ 15
THE CONCILIATION PANEL

(1)   All disputes arising from the relationship between the members of the Association shall be settled by the conciliation panel.

(2)   The conciliation panel consists of three full Association members. One party to the dispute shall appoint a member of the Association as conciliator to the conciliation panel in writing. Upon the executive board's request to be made within 7 days, the other party to the dispute shall appoint a member to the conciliation member. 7 After notification by the executive board within seven days, the named arbitrators shall elect a third full member as chairperson to the conciliation panel within another fourteen days. In the event of a tie of votes, the chairperson shall be chosen by lot from the persons suggested.

(8)   The conciliation panel renders its decision in the presence of all its members with a simple majority. It shall pass its decision to the best of its knowledge and conscientiously. Its decisions shall be binding on the Association.

Article 16
DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION

(1)   The voluntary dissolution of the Association may decided upon only at an extraordinary general meeting called for this purpose and only with a majority of two thirds of the votes validly cast.

(2)   This general meeting shall also decide on the Association's liquidation, provided the Association has assets. In particular, it shall appoint a liquidator and decide whom the assets of the Association remaining after all liabilities have been paid shall be transferred to. If the Association is dissolved or if its former purpose has been fulfilled, its remaining assets shall be used for not-for-profit, charitable or ecclesiastical purposes in accordance with §§ 34ff. BAO.

(3)   The last executive board of the Association shall notify the Association's voluntary dissolution to the appropriate Security Directorate in writing within four weeks after the extraordinary general meeting has passed the resolution leading to the Association's dissolution. It shall also publish the Association's voluntary dissolution in an official gazette within the same period.