

OMCL Network of the Council of Europe

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Annex 5 to GEON ToR: Maintenance of Membership to the GEON

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GEON Terms of Reference

Annex 5: Maintenance of Membership to the GEON

1. Introduction

The General European OMCL Network (GEON) is composed of full and associated members that fulfill the agreed rules of the Network as well as laboratories with a limited membership status. The document Terms of Reference of the GEON, in its current version, and its annexes define, amongst others, the rights and responsibilities of members to the Network. These considerations and criteria for membership are applicable for both new applicants and existing members. While applicants to the GEON have to demonstrate their legitimacy to become member of the network following a defined application procedure (see document “New Membership to the GEON – Internal Procedure for the GEON Advisory Group and EDQM” in its current version), existing members of the GEON are obliged to prove their scientific competence and their compliance with the rules of the GEON, in particular their independence from commercial organisations, on a regular basis. For this purpose different monitoring instruments are in place.

The present guideline details the critical membership criteria, consequences of non-conformities for network members and the different instruments allowing a regular monitoring of compliance with the criteria. As a general rule, the Secretariat monitors the compliance of membership criteria and brings forward non-compliances to the Advisory Group GEON (AdG-GEON).

The AdG-GEON reviews the concerned information and determines a GEON position in case of non-conformities. In case that an AdG member is from the same country as the “discussed case”, conflicts of interest are excluded by requiring that AdG-GEON member to leave the room during that discussion.

2. Membership criteria

In the context of maintenance of membership, the membership criteria are classified in 2 groups, namely primary (essential) criteria and secondary indicators. The consequences of non-conforming to essential criteria will be more severe than the consequences of non-conforming to secondary indicators.

2.1 Primary (essential) criteria

- a) Independence of testing and control. This relates to impartiality, absence of conflicts of interest and confidentiality of data.

- b) Quality of work. This relates to the scientific and technical competence according to the ISO/IEC 17025 standard. This aspect has an impact on the mutual recognition of results, one of the main binding elements of the GEON.

2.2 Secondary indicators

- a) Regular confirmation of the OMCL status
- b) Regular maintenance of the own OMCL inventory database records.
- c) Submitting an Annual Report that complies with the Annex V of the EDQM EU administrative procedure for OCABR / the requirements of the veterinary batch release network (VBRN) or the document “Model format and content of the OMCLs’ Annual Reports (non-OCABR activities)”, in its current version.
- d) Regular participation in Network activities (e.g. test programmes, working groups, attendance at the Annual Meeting...).
- e) Misuse of GEON and/or MJA logo.

3. Consequences of non-conformities

3.1 Non-conformity regarding primary (essential) criteria

- a) Non-conformity regarding Independence:

This will lead to the suspension of the membership.

In case of this decision the AdG-GEON will take into consideration that exclusion of an OMCL from the GEON may result in loss of access to unique expertise necessary for essential activities (e.g. OCABR).

The name of the suspended member will be mentioned during the next GEON Annual Meeting and listed in the corresponding meeting report.

- b) Non-conformity regarding Quality of work:

This will lead to exclusion of results and / or exclusion of participation in GEON programmes in case the non-conformity is not resolved within a certain time frame. This time frame is to be agreed between the AdG-GEON and the member with reconsideration on an annual basis.

The name of the non-conforming member will be mentioned during the next GEON Annual Meeting and listed in the corresponding meeting report.

The status of the non-conforming member will be changed to limited membership.

Suspension of membership will be considered in case the member cannot present within 3 years documented proof that the quality of work is again conforming to the ISO/IEC 17025 standard.

The GEON will give support to the limited member in order to allow the OMCL to regain compliance to ISO/IEC 17025.

3.2 Non-conformities regarding secondary indicators

Non-conformities lead to mentioning of the name of the member and nature of non-conformities during the next GEON Annual Meeting in case the non-conformity is not resolved within a certain time frame.

3.3 Suspension of membership

In case a suspension of the membership to the GEON is decided, all privileges as defined in the GEON Terms of Reference are suspended.

3.4 Change to limited membership

In case a change of the membership to limited membership status is decided, the privileges are restricted to those defined in the GEON Terms of Reference.

In all cases mentioned above non-conformities are discussed in the Ad-GEON as soon as possible, keeping in mind the current contributions of the non-conforming member in relation to GEON activities and the possible consequences on results or conclusions of that GEON activity. This discussion includes the necessity and urgency to inform stakeholders following a decision of the AdG-GEON.

4. Monitoring instruments

4.1 OMCL status questionnaire

Background

The “questionnaire to query the OMCL status of present and future members of the GEON” is used for new applicants to provide a first overview of the status of the Applicant and as monitoring instrument for members. Rules for the use of this document are detailed in the

preamble of the questionnaire in its current version, which forms Annex 4 of the GEON Terms of Reference.

The current version of the questionnaire template forms Annex 4 of the GEON ToR and can be downloaded from www.edqm.eu.

Role of the EDQM Secretariat

The Secretariat keeps track of received OMCL status questionnaires and confirmations of the validity of available questionnaires. The receipt of confirmations or updated questionnaires sent by OMCLs (preferably via email) is acknowledged by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat will check each year which OMCLs are due to provide a “questionnaire declaration” and will contact those that did not provide this information.

A list of OMCLs that did not provide the declaration is established and forwarded to the AdG-GEON for discussion in the following meeting.

4.2 External assessment of the QMS

Background

In the GEON Terms of Reference it is stated that the members of the OMCL Network must accept external audits covering ISO/IEC 17025 and specific OMCL Network guidelines including an appropriate evaluation of both the technical level and managerial level covering aspects of independence, confidentiality and conflicts of interest for all internal and subcontracting activities; if the external assessment is not part of an MJA by the OMCL Network, the outcome of the assessment (attestation/certificate and scope of assessment/accreditation) must be made available to the OMCL network/EDQM.

Role of the EDQM Secretariat

The Secretariat keeps track of all information with respect to external assessments of the QMS of members as defined in the terms of reference. This information can be sent by the OMCLs via email or (preferably) uploaded in the respective domain of the OMCL inventory database. Alternatively a link to the respective page of the website, where this information is placed, could be made available to the Network via the database.

A list of OMCLs that failed to submit the necessary proof is established and forwarded to the AdG-GEON for discussion in the following meeting.

4.3 OMCL inventory database

Background

In the GEON Terms of Reference it is stated that the scope of activities should be made transparent to the Network and be updated, when applicable (OMCL inventory database; <http://www.edqm.eu/omcldb/>). For this purpose the Network members are obliged to submit

a conformity statement on a regular basis to confirm that the information available on the database is up-to-date.

Role of the EDQM Secretariat

The Secretariat launches the campaign (as a rule once per year) and defines the deadline for returning the “declaration of conformity”, which can be downloaded by the OMCL members individually from the database (domain “OMCL”, rider “Print”).

The Secretariat keeps track of the received declarations.

A list of OMCLs that did not provide the declaration is established and forwarded to the AdG-GEON for discussion in the following meeting.

4.4 Annual Report

Background

The delivery of an annual activity report is part of the obligations of all network members as stated in the GEON Terms of Reference. The reports are made available on a yearly basis ahead of the Annual Meeting of the GEON to the concerned networks; details are described in the document Model Format and Content of the OMCLs’ Annual Reports (Non-OCABR/OBPR Activities) in its current version

Role of the EDQM Secretariat

The Secretariat keeps track of the distributed Annual Reports.

A list of OMCLs that did not provide the Annual Report(s) is established and forwarded to the AdG-GEON for discussion in the following meeting. In case of Annual Reports of OCABR/OBPR activities the respective specific Advisory Groups are involved in the discussion.

5. Evaluation of and decision about membership

The AdG-GEON decides on the action to be taken towards members that do not comply with the Terms of Reference. Before taking a final decision on the consequences following a non-conformity of membership, in all cases the Secretariat will contact the concerned member (OMCL and/or National Competent Authority) and ask for an explanation. The member shall submit a written statement concerning this issue or might be invited to a meeting to give an oral explanation of the situation.

If a sufficient answer is not received within 60 days after the formal request of the Secretariat (which is co-signed by the chairperson of the AdG-GEON), the AdG-GEON decides about appropriate actions. In all cases the member is informed about the decision in an official letter sent by the Secretariat and co-signed by the chairperson of the AdG-GEON.

6. Restoring Membership

Suspension of membership or the change of membership to limited membership status can be lifted provided that the reasons which have led to the suspension or membership change are eliminated. In that case an official application letter including a written proof of the changed situation has to be sent by the concerned OMCL to the Secretariat. The case will be discussed and decided in the following AdG-GEON meeting. The OMCL is informed on the decision and is mentioned in the next Annual Meeting.

7. Reporting and communication to interested parties

The chairperson of the AdG-GEON presents during the Annual Meeting the results of the review of provided and pending membership questionnaires and Annual Reports.

The same applies to the information about external assessment of the QMS and the receipt of declarations of conformity of the inventory database records.

The decisions taken and the consequences of these reviews, like changes in membership status are also communicated to the Annual Meeting plenum.