

**SINCERT News**

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## **SINCERT PILOT ACCREDITATION SCHEME FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF BODIES OPERATING THE VERIFICATION AND VALIDATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PRODUCT DECLARATIONS – EPD**

SINCERT – Italian National System for Accreditation of Certification and Inspection Bodies – is well aware of the need of promoting, in all economical and social activities, the adoption of appropriate solutions to protect the environment and to afford long-term sustainable development.

To this purpose, voluntary initiatives based on conformity to international environmental standards, are particularly effective, being not only propaedeutic to the observance of the regulatory requirements but also aiming at continual improvement of the environmental performances.

SINCERT has been, from the very beginning, strongly committed to support the diffusion of the system approach to environmental quality – based on implementation of environmental management systems (EMS) in conformance with ISO 14001 standard – and has operated, as its best, to foster the validity and effectiveness of the related accredited certifications which have now reached, in Italy, the significant number of about 4.200.

Moreover, SINCERT believes that the system approach to environmental quality may be well complemented by the product/service approach represented by the Environmental Product Declaration – EPD.

The EPD is a document that contains objective, verifiable and thus credible, information on the environmental impact of a product or service “from cradle to grave”. As such, it constitutes a reliable, transparent and complete tool to prove and communicate the “environmental friendliness” of products and services, increasing their visibility and acceptability by the “marketplace”.

The EPD preparation is based on life cycle assessment (LCA) studies according to ISO 14040 series of standards and its issuance is regulated by ISO TR 14025:2000 “Environmental labels and declarations – Type III environmental declarations”.

To render the Declarations mutually comparable and thus usable by the marketplace, common requirements are established for homogeneous product/service categories, through preparation and publication of ad hoc “PSR – Product Specific Requirements” (or “PCR – Product Category Rules”).

Like for other forms of quality demonstration, the EPD is predisposed by the concerned organization (manufacturing goods or supplying services).

To grant its transparency and reliability, the EPD must be verified and validated by a competent Third Party Body who is called to ascertain and assure the correctness of the LCA studies and the credibility and trustiness of the data and information included in the declarations, with reference to the applicable PSR requirements.

In turn, the competence of the “Certification” Body must be recognized by an authoritative Accreditation Body based on uniform and effective criteria established by appropriate normative references.

Finally, the EPD is communicated to the marketplace through adequate registration and publication mechanisms.

EPD programs, as above, have been developed and applied in several countries worldwide (Canada, Denmark, Japan, Norway, Germany, Sweden, Republic of South Korea, and others) and they are associated in the GEDnet (Global Type III Environmental Product Declarations Network).

Among these programs, the Swedish program (or system) – managed by SEMC Swedish Environmental Management Council, as for the approval and publication of the PSR and registration of the Declarations, and by SWEDAC Swedish Accreditation Body, as for the accreditation of the EPD verifiers – is the most advanced and consolidated.

SINCERT joined the INTEND Project with the aim to contribute to the EPD development in Italy and at an international level, by working closely with the different partners participating in the project (organizations, consultant companies, certification bodies), achieving a better understanding of the different kinds of problems involved, developing know how and experience and establishing useful relationships.

In parallel and as an input to the project's development, SINCERT has established a pilot accreditation scheme of the Bodies operating the verification and validation of EPDs.

The main features of the scheme – that was officially launched on May 14<sup>th</sup> 2004 – are briefly outlined in the following.

The SINCERT accreditation scheme of Bodies operating the verification and validation of EPD is an autonomous scheme, distinct from other accreditation schemes regarding both management system certifications (QMS, EMS, OHSAS, ISMS, etc..) and traditional product/service certification.

Are entitled to apply for accreditation – as Bodies operating the verification and validation of EPD – all Bodies owning accreditation for EMS certification in the EA sectors in which the categories of products and services subject to the EDP verification/validation may be, generically, inscribed. The possession of accreditation for conventional product certification represents a simplification factor for the accreditation proceedings but it does not constitute a pre-requisite for the access to the scheme.

Accreditation is granted with reference to specific categories of products and services (and related PSR) which are properly identified in the accreditation scope. The introduction of new categories is treated as an extension of the accreditation scope.

The normative references for the Body to be accredited are: Generic: ISO/IEC Guide 65 and related IAF Application Guidance; Specific: ISO TR 14025 and SEMC document MSR 1999:2, SINCERT Technical Regulations (under preparation).

The normative references for the clients of the Body are: Generic: ISO TR 14025 and SEMC document MSR 1999:2, ISO 14040, 14041, 14042, 14043, others (eventual); Specific: PSR – Product Specific Requirements.

The activities are carried out with the support of SWEDAC, concerning the evaluation of the applicant Bodies, and of SEMC, regarding the final approval and publication of the PSR and the registration of the EPD verified and validated under SINCERT accreditation.

SINCERT believes that the cooperation with SWEDAC will help to maximize the learning process and facilitate the possibility of operating independently in the next future.

The cooperation with SEMC will continue until an Italian Competent Body (however named) with functions of approval/publication of the PSR and registration of EPD will be possibly established. In case of establishment of an International Body, as per the objectives of the INTEND Project, SINCERT will keep with such Body, either directly or through a national reference if any, relations similar to those kept with SEMC, as described above.

SINCERT will, furthermore and as far as applicable, implement in its accreditation scheme the requirements of the International EPD Scheme as developed within the INTEND Project.

The first accreditation for the verification and validation of EPD has been granted to the Certification Body RINA S.p.A. on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2004. Accreditations of a few other Bodies are in progress.

SINCERT believes that the EPD approach to environmental quality represents a challenge and a great opportunity to build up a long-term sustainable development and confides that it will encounter a wide diffusion in the modern social-economical context.

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