

# CSC Certification Body Summary Audit Report 2024

## 1. Introduction

The Concrete Sustainability Council (CSC) oversees and enhances the international certification system, including the management of the auditing software known as "Toolbox". CSC-accredited Certification Bodies (CBs) serve as the primary point of contact and contractual partners for clients seeking certification. CBs are responsible for managing the certification process, which includes:

- Assigning qualified auditors to assess client-provided evidence
- Conducting representative on-site audits
- Issuing and publishing certificates upon successful completion of the process

To maintain the integrity of the system, the CSC regularly conducts on-site audits of Certification Bodies. These audits ensure CBs adhere to the accreditation standards outlined in the CSC Technical Manual. This report presents a comprehensive summary of the CB audits conducted in 2024, providing insights into the effectiveness and compliance of the certification process.

## 2. Objective

The overall objectives of the CSC audits are:

- Ensure the robustness of the CSC certification system.
- Ensure that the rigor to obtain CSC certification is comparable.
- Ensure that the certification process is comparable.
- Improve the CSC certification system by receiving feedback from the CBs.

## 3. Execution

First, CSC assesses the organizational process of the CB:

1. Training of auditors
2. Audit workflow description
3. Audit workflow checklist
4. Participation in global/harmonization meetings
5. On-site audit (required numbers, auditing process)
6. Correct application of the CSC system

Next, the validations of the CB are assessed in randomly selected CSC projects:

1. Criteria: Prerequisites
2. Criteria: Exemplary Performance Credits
3. Criteria: Credits where publicly available information is required
4. Criteria: Credits where publicly available targets are required
5. Criteria: Supply chain credits
6. Criteria: Mandatory Credits
7. [NEW in 2024] 5 additional randomly criteria chosen by the CSC
8. [NEW in 2024] R-Module/ CO<sub>2</sub>-Module

Lastly, the CSC provides a summary of both parts of the audit.

#### **4. Key findings**

##### **4.1. Organizational processes**

There were no shortcomings regarding the organizational processes. The audited Certification Bodies (CB) were able to provide valid accreditation certificates as outlined in the CSC CB agreement. Furthermore, the CBs were able to describe their process, how current and future auditors are trained and how new information is distributed within the company. New auditors undergo a comprehensive training process, including a one-on-one certification process with a qualified CSC auditor. There are specific requirements for auditors and lead auditors as per ISO 17021, with trainee audits to follow. Auditors are required to have both system and product qualifications.

Additionally, the CBs could show their individual tools such as checklists or internal software. The CSC Toolbox is used as a checklist as well, with critical points examined on-site based on client responses. The auditor report serves as a control mechanism and provides an overview.

For on-site audits, plant selection is done in collaboration with the client, ensuring main plants are included. Auditors also check critical points beyond the required on-site audit topics, with any issues being followed up through document checks. For recertifications, plants that were not audited on-site during the initial certification are then selected for on-site audits.

To ensure consistency in the implementation of the CSC system, the CB shall participate in harmonization meetings organized by the CSC. This obligation is fulfilled by the audited CBs partially. One CB receives its information primarily through the RSO, which is acceptable. However, it was suggested that the CB should also participate in the meetings directly, as this would allow for faster access to information. The CB has promised improvement in this regard, now that more personnel are available. In general CSC keeps current auditors informed about changes and updates to the certification system via email and through meetings and discussions.

Overall, the audit confirms that the audited CBs are operating in compliance with the required standards and effectively implementing the CSC certification system.

##### **4.2. Chain of custody credit**

In some cases, it was noticed that the supplier calculator was used, but the printout (PDF) was not uploaded. To maintain transparency and clarity in the points awarded, it is mandatory that the required evidence is uploaded as specified. This topic will be addressed in the next CB Roundtable.

In one assessment it was discovered that one of the cement suppliers had lost its certification. According to the CSC Technical Manual, Chapter 1.9 "Certificate Validity and Withdrawal" (page 23/164), if a supplier fails to pursue recertification, the concrete plant's score must be adjusted downward by the score. In this case the score was significant, which could potentially result in a lower overall certification level for the

assessed plant. However, during the CSC audit, evidence was presented and it was clarified that the cement supplier in question is currently undergoing the recertification process (registered assessment). Given this information and the ongoing recertification efforts, no further actions are required at this time.

#### **4.3. Credits where publicly available information is required**

In instances where the company's website is cited as supporting evidence, it is essential that the corresponding link is included in the explanatory field. In a few cases, the link was missing, resulting in a lack of immediate clarity during the CSC audit.

#### **4.4. M5.03 (EP) Participation to a benchmarking study**

This criterion only applies to the Netherlands and Italy. Please see the CSC annex V2.1. In one case points should not have been awarded here. However, immediate action was not required as it does not affect the certification level of the client. The CB has been advised of this issue and is urged to consider it in forthcoming certifications. This will be addressed at the next CB Roundtable to ensure that everyone is informed about the criterion M5.03. It could still be relevant for upgrades following V2.1. This criterion is no longer available for new projects following V3.0.

#### **4.5. E7.07 "Responsible processing of 'non-concrete' materials"**

In one assessment standard waste separation was incorrectly awarded points. While this did not affect the overall certification level, auditors were advised to be more vigilant in future assessments. CSC is considering clarifying the description of this criterion.

In another assessment, fresh concrete recycling was incorrectly awarded points. While this did not affect the overall certification level, auditors were advised to be more vigilant in future assessments. Recycling fresh concrete alone is insufficient to meet the required criteria. While it contributes to sustainability and resource efficiency, additional measures or practices are necessary to ensure compliance with this criterion. This topic is already addressed in a previous criterion. CSC is considering clarifying the description of this criterion.

*Post-audit note: This criterion has been revised in Version 3.0, now focusing on precast concrete manufacturers under E7.07 (EP) "Reuse and further use of concrete elements in precast plants." It could still be relevant for upgrades following version 2.1. This criterion is no longer available for new projects following V3.0.*

#### **4.6. E1.02 "Implementation of life cycle assessment"**

In one assessment, an LCA tool that had not yet been approved by CSC was used. CSC committed to reviewing this tool post-audit. *Post-audit note: The company operating the not yet accepted LCA-Tool has been contacted for additional information about the tool. An inquiry with the operator of the LCA-Tool revealed that the tool is not certified. Therefore, the tool cannot currently be recognized. The CB was contacted and requested to follow up on this matter together with the client within a period of 3 months.*

→ The customer was subsequently able to provide evidence of a valid EPD, which contributes to the fulfillment of this criterion.

#### **4.7. S4.09 External control of social standards and compliance with human rights**

The audit report from the Ministry of Labor was available; however, it only addresses Health and Safety and does not cover other topics, such as human rights, which are relevant to the criteria. This serves as an example of a performance point. The extra point was not decisive and does not change the level. Therefore, no further measures were taken, except that attention was drawn to this for the future.

#### **4.8. B2.03 Confidential investigation**

In one assessment the required evidence was not provided. Here, the criterion was misunderstood. The client and CB assumed that it concerned disciplinary matters relating to workers. During the CSC audit the CB could show the implementations in the annual report of the client.

In another case the necessary evidence was also missing. But during the CSC Audit, subsequently, a screenshot from the internal employee portal was displayed, to demonstrate where the information can be found.

The errors were pointed out. However, the evidence could be shown during the audit. No further actions are required.

### **5. Improvement opportunities for the CSC certification system**

Continuous improvement of the CSC certification system, including its toolbox, is an important lever to improve the sustainability performance of CSC certified plants. The CSC also took the opportunity of a feedback discussion with the certification body to find further potential for improvement for the certification system and its toolbox. These proposed changes aim to enhance the clarity, efficiency, and effectiveness of the CSC certification process, while also increasing its relevance and value to participating organizations. Improvements and feedback can also be provided during the next CB Roundtable.

#### **5.1. Credits where publicly available information is required**

To improve the verification process, it is proposed that when links are provided as evidence, it should be mandatory to also upload a timestamped screenshot. This would ensure that auditors can easily access and verify the information, even if the original link becomes unavailable or the content changes over time. This will be addressed at the next CB Roundtable to receive more feedback.

### **6. CB compliance with accreditation standard**

The CSC audits conducted in 2024 showed that the audited certification bodies adhere to the CSC-CB agreement and the criteria outlined in the CSC Technical Manual V3.0. These audits also affirmed the level of certification expertise possessed by the accredited CBs, particularly in concrete production and its chain of custody. The competence of CB auditors is upheld through rigorous internal training programs. Any minor non-conformities—those that do not impact the client's certification status—

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were collaboratively identified and promptly corrected or earmarked for the client's upcoming recertification. Additionally, opportunities for optimization were proposed and deliberated with other CBs, resulting in the successful implementation of some of these suggestions. All the points mentioned will be addressed at the next CB Roundtable so that other CBs are also made aware of the problems in order to continuously improve together.

## **7. Continuation: CB audits in 2025**

The CSC will continue performing CB audits in 2025 in various markets. Due to the increasing number of CSC certificates, the number of audits conducted in relevant markets will be increased.

Berlin, 16.01.2025

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Andreas Tuan Phan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andreas Tuan Phan