

QUALITY AND COMPETENCE SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT: Research Institute of Forensic Science and Criminology (NIKK) develops a certification system for forensic practitioners in Bulgaria. The system bases on experiences of some European countries, but it has to be consistent with the specific Bulgarian expert practice. At present the system covers the crime scene examinations, fingerprinting, trace marks, ballistics, document examinations and forensic photography. In the future it will encompass other types of examinations, like chemical, physico-chemical, biological, etc.

KEY WORDS: Competence; Certification.

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For certifying the right of forensic practitioners to perform definite forensic expert activities.

SCOPE

1. The present system has been developed on the bases of the experiences of some European countries, but it has been made consistent with the specific nature of the Bulgarian expert practice. It covers the crime scene visits as well as the expert examinations in the fields of fingerprinting, trace marks, ballistics, document examinations and forensic photography. In future it will be enlarged to encompass the chemical, physico-chemical, biological, etc. expert examinations.
2. The System is a complex of measures for assessing the level of theoretical knowledge and practical skills of expert personnel through passing exams and issuing a qualification certificate. The system complex is applied only after the successful completing of preparatory and refreshing expert courses, followed by at least one year of practical probation in a given field.
3. The training, qualification and the refreshing courses for the expert personnel, as well as their planning and knowledge assessment are performed in accordance with the requirements for gaining optimal

level of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, regulated in details by this System.

4. The System development is imposed by several causes:
 - a different approach for selecting the recruits and qualification of the expert staff, which leads to insufficient professionalism, demonstrated in the performance of forensic expert activities and creates real risks for omissions in the course of crime scene examinations; as well as to non-observance of some procedure requirements, valid for assigning expert examinations;
 - presence of different criteria for determining the level of theoretical knowledge and practical skills, possessed by the expert personnel;
 - being admitted an ENFSI Member, Research Institute of Forensic Science and Criminology (NIKK) will set the standards for assessing the professional skills of experts and giving them the right to work in the area of forensic examinations, as well as to witness their experts' opinions in the court room.
5. NIKK is applying this System based on the rights, given to the Institute by the Law of Ministry of Interior, to manage methodically and to control the work of the Forensic Scientific and Technical Laboratories at Regional Directorates of Interior, as well as to be the institution, issuing certificates.
6. NIKK may change the scope and contents of System, and the technology of its realization, when that is imposed by adopted changes in the existing legal bases, regulating the expert activities of Ministry of Interior.

TASKS

1. To work out a Classification Chart covering the forensic activities, divided into groups and subgroups according to their specific nature and on the bases of responsibility of the specialist.
2. To determine the optimal level of knowledge and skills, possessed by the personnel on different expert appointments.
3. To determine the system, forms and ways of gaining a certificate.
4. To prepare each expert, working for the judicial system, for accreditation.
5. To determine the certificate requisites.

CLASSIFICATION CHART FOR FORENSIC EXPERT ACTIVITIES

1. The Classification Chart includes forensic expert activities, marked by a Cyrillic letter code, as it follows:
 - crime scene visit (basic code “O”);
 - fingerprinting (basic code “Д”);
 - trace marks (basic code “Т”);
 - ballistics (basic code “Б”);
 - document examinations (basic code “И”);
 - forensic photography (basic code “Ф”).
2. The Classifying Chart of the kinds of forensic activities is to be developed by Sector Chiefs at department “Forensic Techniques”. If it turns to be convenient, the activities in a particular Sector may be set apart in separate groups, each of which is additionally marked with a number code (serial number from 01 to 99), including similar in nature and complexity activities.
3. If any changes in the methods of performing particular activities occur, Classifying Chart is to be updated and, if necessary, additional checks of personnel’s knowledge and skills are carried out.

REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICANTS

1. Applicant must be working for the Ministry of Interior as an expert in NIKK or Regional Police Structures.
2. Applicant has to have completed a training course in the Police Academy of Ministry of Interior, expert courses in NIKK or in a foreign country, and to have at least one year of practical experience in the field of interest.
3. The optimum of knowledge and skills, required for particular expert positions, are defined in the Classifying Chart.

TERMS FOR SYSTEM APPLYING

1. Synopses for the theoretical and the practical exams for each group of forensic expert activity, defined in the Classifying Chart, and the level of optimum knowledge and skills, the experts and the junior experts must possess, are prepared by the Sector Chiefs at Department “Forensic techniques” – NIKK, following a specified standard.

2. System has been debated with Directorate of National Police, Police Academy and Ministry of Justice. It has been approved and signed by the Minister of Interior.
3. Only once, without passing the exams, Certificates are issued only to the now working experts, who have at least three years of practical experience and have performed, and signed not less than 30 experts' opinions in the area, for which they apply.
4. The exams are held separately for each activity listed in the Classification Chart, following a previously prepared schedule.
5. The exams are taken in the presence of examining committees, appointed by an order of the relevant chief, and they must include representatives of NIKK, specialists, possessing already Certificates for the relevant group of activities, and a representative of the Regional Police Service.
6. Theoretical examinations are in the form of tests. Only applicants, who have passed them successfully, are allowed to take the practical exams.
7. Examinations for gaining Certificates are organized once a year.
8. If an applicant fails at the examinations, he is given 6 months for additional preparation and has the right to try again. On a second fail, NIKK writes a letter to the relevant service with the opinion saying that the particular applicant is not suitable to be appointed on an expert position in future.
9. NIKK legalises the issued Certificates on a five years term, for which:
 - the applicant must have been working in the certified areas for at least three years and must have performed and signed not less than 30 experts' opinions in each of them;
 - the applicant must pass additional theoretical and practical examinations, if meanwhile new equipment, methods and technologies have been put into use.