



# The European Certificate of Psychotherapy

## Contents

- Preamble
- Definitions
- Documents
- 1. Bodies involved in the award of the ECP
- 2. Conditions for the award of the European Certificate of Psychotherapy
- 3. Psychotherapy modalities
- 4. Length and content of psychotherapy training
- 5. Completion of Training
- 6. Awarding Procedures
- 7. Registration
- 8. Appeals & Complaints Procedures
- 9. Grandparenting
- 10. Exceptions
  - Status

## Preamble

In 1991, the European Association for Psychotherapy was founded in Vienna, Austria by psychotherapy organisations in a number of European countries and from a number of different modalities within psychotherapy. It now brings together nearly 200 organisations, from about 40 European countries, with both national organisations and European-wide organisations in many different modalities, and by that, more than 120,000 psychotherapists.

The 21<sup>st</sup> of October 1990 Strasbourg Declaration on Psychotherapy is the bedrock of its commitment to creating a compatible and independent profession of psychotherapy across Europe.

The European Association for Psychotherapy (hereafter, the EAP) is concerned to protect the interest of this profession and the public it serves, by ensuring that the profession functions at an appropriate level of training and practice. One of its aims is to establish a European Certificate of Psychotherapy (hereafter, the ECP), which will help ensure that psychotherapists are trained to the EAP's standards and which will help guarantee the mobility of professional psychotherapists. This is in accordance with the aims of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the non-discrimination accord valid within the framework of the European Union (EU), and the principle of freedom of movement of persons and services.

The European Certificate of Psychotherapy is currently in general alignment with ISO/IEC 17024 (2012), which is an international standard that sets out criteria for an organisation's certification program for assessing and certifying the competence of individual persons in different occupations and professions. Conformity with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) will be sought.

## Definitions

The Statutes of the EAP define this document as: "... a European Certificate of Psychotherapy Document (ECP Document) to provide guidelines for the procedure and criteria of training and qualifications". (Statutes: § 2.5); and it is also mentioned in § 4.1.2.2; § 4.1.3.2. There is also mention of: "... a register of psychotherapists who have qualified for the European Certificate of Psychotherapy". (Statutes: § 13.1); the European Training Standards Committee (ETSC), the National Umbrella Organisations Committee (NUOC), the European Wide Organisations Committee (EWOC), the Training & Accreditation Committee (TAC) and the Grandparenting Advisory Panel (GAP); which are all established as sub-committees of the Governing Board (Statutes: § 5.2.5). The Grandparenting Advisory Panel (GAP) is defined in this document (§ 10.2.2).

## Documents

The latest versions of the Statutes of the EAP; the EAP's Statement of Ethical Principles; the Register of ECP holders; the Professional Competencies of a European Psychotherapist: Core Competencies; the TAC document (establishing the procedure for accepting EAPTIs); and this "ECP document" are the main papers of the EAP.

The Guidelines for Procedures and By-Laws of the EAP's Governing Board and all its committees & sub-committees have been accepted as a guideline only.

## 1. Bodies involved in the award of the ECP

### 1.1. The European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP)

1.1.1. Unless otherwise specified, reference to the EAP should be taken to mean the Governing Board of the EAP, or any body within the EAP authorised by the Governing Board. In matters dealing with the European Certificate of Psychotherapy (ECP), this would usually be the European Training Standards Committee (ETSC), the Training & Accreditation Committee (TAC), and the EAP Registrar.

### 1.2. National Awarding Organisation (NAO)

1.2.1. A National Awarding Organisation (hereafter, NAO) must be an organisational member of the EAP in good standing.

1.2.2. The NAO must be an independent legal entity with its head office in the country for which it acts as a National Organization for psychotherapy, and with statutes, regulations or other written constitutions, which are compatible with the statutes and purposes of the EAP.

1.2.3. The NAO must be; either that country's National Umbrella Organization (EAP statutes 4.1.2) i.e. a single organization within a country that is recognized by the EAP as demonstrably the largest organization representing the broadest range of different approaches to psychotherapy in that country; or, if there is no National Umbrella Organization, a member organization of the EAP based in the country concerned, may be recognized by the EAP as "able to act as" the NAO. A National Umbrella Organisation may be appointed a National Awarding Organisation as stipulated below. (EAP Statutes: 4.1.2.1)

1.2.3.1. To become a NAO, a National Umbrella Organisation (NUO) must be accredited by the EAP as having:

- (1) Ethical guidelines which are binding on any practitioners which it may recommend for the award of the Certificate;
- (2) Disciplinary and complaints procedures which may lead to disciplinary action against any practitioners which it may recommend for the award of the Certificate and, if appropriate, their removal from the Register.
- (3) Training standards compatible with the EAP, methods of applying them, CPD-regulations.

- 1.2.3.2. The NUO will be referred to the National Umbrella Organisations Committee (NUOC) who has a process to check the details of their application. If the organisation seems suitable, they will be recommended to the Governing Board for approval as a NAO.
- 1.2.3.3. Initially, if it is wished to be able to recommend practitioners for the award of the Certificate who have not completed an accredited training and are currently practising, the NAO must also have suitable procedures for 'grand-parenting' those practitioners.
- 1.2.3.4. The NAO must reapply every seven years to renew its awarding status. There may be a fee for considering reapplications, which will be set by the EAP. These criteria are in the Procedures for NUOC.
- 1.2.4. NAOs represent psychotherapy in that country, can accredit training organisations, can recommend psychotherapists for the ECP and register them, can promote conferences and symposia, and can work towards the acceptance in their country of the definition of psychotherapy, as stated in the 1990 Strasbourg Declaration.

### **1.3. European Wide Accrediting Organisation (EWAO)**

- 1.3.1. The European Wide Accrediting Organisation (hereafter, EWAO) must be an organisational member of the EAP in good standing.
- 1.3.2. The European Wide Accrediting Organization must be an independent legal entity with its head office in a European country and with statutes, regulations or other written constitution, which are compatible with the statutes of the EAP and must represent the interests of its modality of psychotherapy in the whole of Europe.
- 1.3.3. A European Wide Organisation (EWO) (EAP Statutes: 4.1.3.) may be appointed a European Wide Accrediting Organisation as stipulated below. (EAP Statutes: 4.1.3.1)
  - 1.3.3.1. The EWO must have, in each of six or more European countries, either, a training at or above the level required for the ECP; or, have, as members, professional organisations with trainings at this level. It must have the large majority of its members living in European countries.
  - 1.3.3.2. To become an EWAO, a European Wide Organisation (EWO) must be accredited by the EAP, which requires that:
    - (1) Its accreditation processes must be at or above a standard compatible with the award of the ECP. It must represent a specific modality of psychotherapy as demonstrated by the criteria in § 3.
    - (2) This modality must be: either, clearly distinct from any other modality represented by a European Wide Organisation in the EAP; or it must represent the largest number of practitioners in this modality of any European Wide Organisation member of the EAP.
    - (3) It must be the only EWAO for that modality.
  - 1.3.3.3. The EWO will be referred to the European Wide Organisations Committee (EWOC) who will have a process to check the details of their application. If the organisation seems suitable, they will be recommended to the Governing Board for approval as an EWAO.
  - 1.3.3.4. The EWAO must reapply every seven years to renew its accrediting status. There may be a fee for considering reapplications, which will be set by the EAP. These criteria are in the Procedures for EWOC.
- 1.3.4. EWAOs can accredit training organisations and register psychotherapists in their method or modality of psychotherapy.

### **1.4. European Accredited Psychotherapy Training Institute (EAPTI)**

- 1.4.1. Psychotherapy Training Organisations must be members in good standing of their country's NAO and of the relevant EWAO. They must be appropriately registered, and have their administration and finances in good order. The Training Organisation must have appropriate ethical standards and complaints procedures for its trainees.

- 1.4.2. To be accepted as a European Accredited Psychotherapy Training Institute (EAPTI) means that graduates of this organisation (or institute) can be awarded the European Certificate of Psychotherapy (ECP) directly, as their training institute has been accredited through a series of procedures outlined in the Training & Accreditation Committee (TAC) document.
- 1.4.3. A training programme, accepted by the EAP as leading to the ECP, must conform to the criteria of the ECP, must be accredited by the relevant EWAO and must be approved by the relevant NAO.
  - 1.4.3.1. If there is no NAO in place for the country and if there is no objection from the relevant EWAO, then the TAC can accredit the institute based on the experts' report (TAC: 17.4).
  - 1.4.3.2. If there is no relevant EWAO, the EWOC is asked to scrutinize the method / modality and comment on this back to the TAC (TAC: 18.2).
- 1.4.4. Trainees successfully graduating from an accredited and approved 4-year (minimum) training programme in psychotherapy undertaken at a European Accredited Psychotherapy Training Institute (EAPTI), having been properly accepted by the Training & Accreditations Committee (TAC) of the EAP, will be eligible to apply for the ECP.
- 1.4.5. Criteria and procedures for accepting EAPTIs are established by the TAC, and are accepted by the EAP Board.

## **2. Conditions for the award of the European Certificate of Psychotherapy**

- 2.1. The procedure and conditions for the award of the ECP will normally be determined by the European Training Standards Committee (ETSC) of the Governing Board of the EAP.
- 2.2. The ECP will be awarded to practitioners of psychotherapy (hereafter, practitioners) whose accredited and approved training has been fully completed and who are committed to professional and ethical standards consistent with those of the EAP.
- 2.3. The ECP is awarded for life: it is a "certificate" of professional training.
- 2.4. Practitioners who have been awarded the ECP are eligible to be included in the European Register of ECP Holders (hereafter the ECP-R)<sup>1</sup>, which will be published and maintained by the EAP.

## **3. Psychotherapy modalities**

- 3.1. The method of psychotherapy used (hereafter, modality) must be well defined and distinguishable from other psychotherapy modalities and have a clear theoretical basis in the human sciences.
- 3.2. The theory must be integrated with the practice, be applicable to a broad range of problems, and have been demonstrated to be effective.
- 3.3. The scientific validity of the modality must have been accepted by the EAP and it must have been recognised in several European countries as valid by relevant professional organisations.

## **4. Length and content of psychotherapy education and training**

- 4.1. The total duration of the education and training will not be less than 3200 hours:
  - a) Either spread over a minimum of seven years, with the first three years being the equivalent of a relevant university degree. The later four years must be in a training

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<sup>1</sup> The previously called "European Register of Psychotherapists (ERP)" was renamed as Register of ECP Holders (ECP-R).

specific to psychotherapy, must contain all the elements defined in § 4.2 of this document, and will not be less than 1400 hours.

- b) Or conducted as a 5-year full-time academic education and training in psychotherapy, organised by a university, which must contain all the theoretical and practical elements defined in § 4.2 of this document.

4.2. The training meets the EAP's criteria for basic professional training, and includes the following elements:

- 4.2.1. **Personal Psychotherapeutic Experience, or equivalent:** This should be taken to include training analysis, self-experience, and other methods involving elements of self-reflection, therapy, and personal experience (not less than 250 hours) normally spread over 4 years. No single term is agreed by all psychotherapy methods. Any training shall include arrangements to ensure that the trainees can identify and appropriately manage their involvement in and contributions to the processes of the psychotherapies that they practice in accordance with their specific methods.
- 4.2.2. **Theoretical Study:** There will be a general part of university or professional training and a part, which is specific to psychotherapy. University or professional courses leading to a first University degree or its equivalent professional qualification in subjects relevant to psychotherapy may be allowed as a part of, or the whole of, the general part of psychotherapy theory, but cannot contribute towards the 4 years of specific psychotherapy training. Theoretical study (500 to 800 hours) during the 4 years of training specific to psychotherapy should include the following elements:

- \* Theories of human development throughout the life-cycle
- \* An understanding of other psychotherapeutic approaches
- \* A theory of change
- \* An understanding of social and cultural issues in relation to psychotherapy
- \* Theories of psychopathology
- \* Theories of assessment and intervention

4.2.3. **Practical Training:** This will include sufficient practice (not less than 300 hours) under continuous supervision (not less than 150 hours) appropriate to the psychotherapeutic modality and will be at least two years in duration.

4.2.4. **Placement in a mental health setting or equivalent professional experience:** The placement must provide adequate experience of psycho-social crisis and of collaboration with other specialists in the mental health field.

4.3. Supervision, training and, where applicable, personal psychotherapy should be provided by practitioners whose training meets the criteria of the ECP. Advanced trainings for trainers and supervisors are not covered by these criteria, but will be required.

4.4. Training courses are required to be registered with their relevant NAO and accredited by their relevant EWAO (§1.4). Then they are recommended to apply to the Training & Accreditation Committee (TAC) for European Accredited Psychotherapy Training Institute (EAPTI) status. The detailed criteria and procedures for obtaining EAPTI status are contained in the TAC document. The TAC is responsible for checking and accepting the quality and procedures of the training organisation and subsequently recommending it to the Governing Board for EAPTI status.

## 5. Completion of Education and Training

5.1. By the end of the training, the trainee (now a practitioner) will have to have demonstrated personal, social and professional maturity and a commitment to working to a professional code and ethical standards. They will also have to be able to demonstrate the Core Competencies of a European Psychotherapist.

- 5.2. There will be an assessment of both theoretical and practical training course work; and there may be an assessment of their professional competency.
- 5.3. The practitioner should have completed a required university or equivalent training in human or social sciences and the specialised 4-years of psychotherapy training, within organisations training in the same method of psychotherapy; or 5-year full-time academic education and training in psychotherapy, organised by a university.
- 5.4. The practitioner must be a member of a professional psychotherapy organisation which has a binding ethical code, complaints and disciplinary procedure consistent with and recognised by their NAO and the relevant EWAO.
- 5.5. The NAOs and EWAOs will determine how Training Organisations finally assess trainees of approved & accredited training programmes.

## 6. Awarding Procedures

- 6.1. EAP recognises that some aspects of training are confidential and some may be commercially sensitive. Materials used in training may be the intellectual property of the trainers, of the Training Organisation, or of others. Members of the EAP and of the other bodies involved in the award of the ECP have a duty to safeguard the confidentiality and the ownership of such material made available to them under these criteria.
- 6.2. The ECP will be awarded by the EAP according to these criteria and this procedure in two ways (Direct Award or Grandparenting procedure):
  - 6.2.1. By "Direct Award" for individuals who have graduated from a European Accredited Psychotherapy Training Institute (EAPTI) as described in § 1.4.
  - 6.2.2. By the "Grandparenting procedure" for established psychotherapists who have previously completed a proper psychotherapy training (or equivalent) and have had a professional psychotherapeutic practice for at least 3 years after their graduation:
    - 6.2.2.1. On the recommendation of the appropriate National Awarding Organisation (NAO). The applicant needs to be a member of the NAO (or of an organisational member of the NAO) in their country (or, if one doesn't exist, a NAO that is prepared to act for psychotherapists in that country) and so gets on their Register of Psychotherapists: And with an accreditation from the appropriate European Wide Accrediting Organisation (EWAO) representing the practitioner's modality of psychotherapy.
    - 6.2.2.2. If a relevant EWAO does not exist, the NAO can apply, on the individual's behalf, to the Grandparenting Advisory Panel (GAP) (see 10.2.2.).
- 6.3. The award of the ECP will proceed in steps as follows:
  - 6.3.1. For "Direct Award" the applicants (graduates from an EAPTI) send their completed ECP application to their EAPTI where it is checked and sent to the EAP Head office.

For Direct Award the ECP application must contain:

- 6.3.1.1. "Practitioner Registration Form ("PRF"), filled in and signed;
- 6.3.1.2. 'Curriculum Vitae for Direct Award' ('CV') in English;
- 6.3.1.3. A signature-of recommendation by the EAPTI – signed 'Notification form for Direct award';
- 6.3.1.4. A certificate of graduation from their EAPTI;
- 6.3.1.5. A signature on the Strasbourg Declaration about Psychotherapy;

- 6.3.1.6. The appropriate ECP fee and their ECP-R registration fee for the first 5 years.
- 6.3.2. For established practitioners ("Grandparenting procedure"), the applicants send their completed ECP application to their relevant NAO where it is checked and this is sent to the relevant EWAO. The EWAO must return the application with an approval / objection to the NAO within 6 weeks, otherwise the file is presented by the NAO to the GAP (see 6.2.2.2.).  
  
For "Grandparenting" the ECP application must contain:
  - 6.3.2.1. 'Practitioner Registration Form' ('PRF') filled in and signed;
  - 6.3.2.2. 'Curriculum Vitae for Grandparenting' ('CV') in English;
  - 6.3.2.3. A signature of recommendation by the relevant NAO and EWAO for ECP award – signed 'Notification form for Grandparenting';
  - 6.3.2.4. A signature on the Strasbourg Declaration about Psychotherapy;
  - 6.3.2.5. The appropriate ECP fee and their ECP-R registration fee for the first 5 years.
- 6.4. The EAPTI can provide an upgrading program for applicants who have graduated from the training institute less than 3 years before the training institute was accredited as an EAPTI, in order to bring those applicants up to the current ECP standard.
- 6.5. Applicants who have graduated more than 3 years before the school's accreditation as an EAPTI are subject to the procedures outlined in section 6.3.2.

## **7. Registration**

- 7.1. Individuals who have been awarded the ECP are automatically eligible to be included on the European Register of ECP Holders (ECP-R).
- 7.2. The EAP Registrar will be responsible for maintaining the European Register of ECP Holders (ECP-R) and will be responsible for recording the details of practitioners who are eligible to be on the ECP-R.
- 7.3. All ECP holders on the ECP-R are required to be a member of a suitable National or European organisation that is the member of the EAP for quality assurance, professional and ethical practice, and for Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The responsibility for checking the details of the practitioner's CPD requirements lies with the relevant NAO, and/or with the relevant EWAO or another professional EAP member organisation.
- 7.4. The EAP will publish the ECP-R electronically on the EAP website and will make details of current ECP holders publicly available.
- 7.5. There are procedures for removing the names of ECP holders from the ECP-R on health or disciplinary grounds and for non-payment of fees.

## **8. Quality Assurance, Complaints & Appeals Procedures**

- 8.1. The EAP Governing Board is responsible for ensuring that the processes and procedures of this document are carried out, and that the quality of the ECP and the European Register of ECP holders (ECP-R) is maintained.
- 8.2. If a NAO refuses to recommend the award of the ECP to practitioners whose training has been within a psychotherapy modality scientifically validated by the EAP and who have otherwise completed all requirements, the EWAO representing that modality should first formally request the NAO to change their practice. If the NAO does not do so, the EWAO

can ask the NUOC to investigate the matter. If the NAO is found to have acted without adequate reason, the EAP may withdraw its status as a NAO.

- 8.3. Similarly, if a NAO is aware that an EWAO is not accrediting people for that modality in that country, then they should ask the EWAO to rectify the situation. If the EWAO does not do so, the NAO can ask the EWOC to investigate the matter. If the EWAO is found to have acted without adequate reason, the EAP may withdraw its status as an EWAO.
- 8.4. If an EWAO does not accredit a Training Organisation, which been recognised by a NAO, thus preventing the trainees of that organisation from gaining the ECP, the NAO can ask the EWOC to investigate the matter. If the EWAO is found to have acted without adequate reason, the EAP may withdraw its status as an EWAO.
- 8.5. If a NAO does not recognise a Training Organisation in that country, which has been accredited by an EWAO, thus preventing the trainees of that organisation from gaining the ECP, the EWAO can ask the NUOC to investigate the matter. If the NAO is found to have acted without adequate reason, the EAP may withdraw its status as an NAO.
- 8.6. If an EWAO is aware that a NAO is not grandparenting people for that modality in that country then they should ask the NAO to rectify the situation. If the NAO does not do so, then the EWAO can ask the NUOC to investigate the matter. If the NAO is found to have acted without adequate reason, the EAP may withdraw its status as an NAO.
- 8.7. Training Organisations who are members of a NAO whose courses have not been put forward for approval by the NAO can, in the absence of a relevant EWAO, appeal directly to the ETSC who will investigate the matter and may put that organisation's course forward to the Governing Board for approval, if appropriate.
- 8.8. If an Awarding or Accrediting Organisation (NAO, EWAO) has acted improperly, or has been shown to be at fault, and that this has been clearly established outside of the EAP (as in a Court of Law: an arbitration panel or review body: or by self-admission), then their status as an Awarding/Accrediting Organisation may be reviewed, suspended or removed: appropriate changes may be required to their statutes, ethics, or procedures: or their membership of the EAP may be suspended or withdrawn.
- 8.9. If a Training Organisation (EAPTI) which awards the ECP has acted improperly or has been shown to be at fault, and that this has been clearly established outside of the EAP (as in a Court of Law; an arbitration panel or review body; or by self-admission), the EAP will first require matters to be properly investigated by the relevant NAO or EWAO (where they exist) before deciding upon any further action.
- 8.10. The suspension or withdrawal of membership of a NAO or an EWAO or the removal of approved status by the NAO or accredited status by the EWAO from a Training Organisation or a training programme will not threaten the status of any ECP holder.
- 8.11. If a complaint is made against an ECP holder on the ECP-R, it will be directed to the relevant NAO, and/or possibly EWAO. These organisations must follow their published complaints procedures and deal with the complaint appropriately. If, as a result of any disciplinary process, the NAO or EWAO suspends or removes the ECP holder from their own register, they must immediately inform the Registrar of EAP, who will take appropriate action, which may include removal/suspension from the ECP-R.
- 8.12. The task of the ETSC is to observe, collect and point out developments and problems in relation to the implementations of processes and procedures of this document and inform the EAP Governing Board and/or its committees.

## **9. Grandparenting**

- 9.1. The introduction of any new professional qualification means that the status of current psychotherapy practitioners needs to be recognised. This is especially important when the qualification is one whose possession could become necessary for professional privileges to be granted, as may happen with the ECP. The process of recognising practitioners who



have acquired expertise through practice and not necessarily through a specific training is known as 'grandparenting'.

- 9.2. Grandparenting is based on the following principles:
  - 9.2.1. The high standards of the ECP are maintained.
  - 9.2.2. The ECP cannot be awarded to a practitioner unless a recommendation to do so is received from a NAO.
  - 9.2.3. The role of the relevant EWAO to monitor training standards within a particular modality is recognised.
  - 9.2.4. The different internal arrangements adopted by different NAOs are recognised.
  - 9.2.5. Practitioners in countries without NAOs must not be disadvantaged by the procedures for awarding the ECP.
  - 9.2.6. The practitioner does not have to submit themselves for examination, nor to undertake further training.
  - 9.2.7. The EAP retains the final authority over the award of the ECP.
- 9.3. The criteria for grandparenting are:
  - 9.3.1. A 'grandparented' practitioner has levels of skill equal or greater than to those of a practitioner trained to the standard of the ECP.
  - 9.3.2. The practitioner is a member of a professional body, usually a member organisation of their NAO, and adheres to a code of ethics which is compatible with that of the EAP.
  - 9.3.3. The practitioner has expertise in a modality of psychotherapy which is recognised by the EAP.
  - 9.3.4. The practitioner has been in independent professional practice for a period appropriate to justify grandparenting and which is in accordance with the provision of the NAO for that country.
  - 9.3.5. Practitioners who are in training, or who have recently completed a training, will not normally be considered for grandparenting, but may have their training recognised retrospectively.

## **10. Exceptions**

- 10.1. If there is no NAO, no National Umbrella Organisation, or no organisation suitable or willing to act as an NAO, a suitably qualified practitioner may receive the ECP on the recommendation of a NAO in another country so long as the practitioner becomes a member of that latter organisation and so long as that latter organisation is willing to apply the regulations of the ECP to that practitioner.
- 10.2. In the absence of an EWAO, either:
  - 10.2.1. An organisation may be recognised by the EAP to represent the modality concerned, or:
  - 10.2.2. A committee, appointed by the Governing Board, composed of 2 members of the EWOC and 2 members of the NUOC and the Registrar shall substitute an EWAO and act as the Grandparenting Advisory Panel (GAP). The GAP will be a sub-committee of the Governing Board.
- 10.3. In cases of doubt or complication, the EAP may require and will initiate additional independent expert or scientific comment.

## **Status**

The original ECP document was accepted at the EAP General Meeting in Rome, 1997, and revised at the EAP General Meeting in Vienna, 1999. The second version was largely the product of a Task Force mandated by the Board in February 2000. The amended document was approved by the ETSC in Paris in Oct 2000, and added to by the ETSC in Feb 2001 (Vienna). That version was accepted at the EAP General Meeting in July 2001 (Moscow).

Since then, with the development of the TAC and EAPTIs, the requirements for CPD, etc. many other minor amendments have been made. The third version was passed in Cambridge, July 2006, and since then has been amended further (in the ETSC & Board in Florence, June 2007, in Vienna, February 2008, Riga Nov 2008, and Vienna Feb 2009). Version 4.0 was passed at the EAP General Meeting (AGM) in July 2009 in Lisbon. The version 5.0 (short amendments in terms of time scale for NAO/EWAO re-accreditations) was accepted at the AGM in July 2012 in Valencia (Spain). The version 6.0. was accepted at the AGM in February 2016 in Vienna (Austria).

The final version 7.0. was accepted at the AGM in February 2017 in Vienna (Austria).