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# Certification of European Individual Professionals and Organizations in Threat Assessment and - Management

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Under the authority of the European  
Association of Threat Assessment  
Professionals (AETAP)

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<b>0. Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. The Quality Standards Committee .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Qualification for Auditing Groups .....	5
1.2 Commitment to AETAP Rules, Ethic and Quality Standards .....	6
1.3 Appeals, complaints and disputes .....	6
1.4 Renewal of Accreditation.....	7
1.5 Suspension and Withdrawal of Certification and Accreditation.....	7
<b>2. Individual Threat Assessment Professionals .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Application.....	8
2.2 Qualification Criteria .....	8
2.3 Selection procedure.....	10
2.4 Assessment personal records .....	10
2.5 Changes in the certification requirements.....	10
2.6 Appeals, complaints and disputes .....	10
2.7 Renewal of Certification .....	11
2.8 Suspending or Withdrawing Certification .....	11
<b>3. Organizations &amp; Institutions.....</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Application.....	12
3.2 Qualification criteria for Organizations .....	12
3.3 Assessment/Audit .....	13
3.4 Records of Certified Organizations.....	13
3.5 Changes in the certification requirements.....	13
3.6 Appeals, complaints and disputes .....	14
3.7 Renewal of Certification for Organizations.....	14
3.8 Suspending or Withdrawing Certification .....	14

## 0. Introduction

AETAP is a professional European organization where people who work in the threat assessment and – management field congregate in order to increase their knowledge and expertise, and create a forum where they can form alliances and international expert networks. AETAP has close international relationships and working agreements with the Canadian, American and Australian-Asian sister organizations.

The demand for threat assessment and - management services in European governmental bodies, private industries, schools and universities have been growing during the past decade. As a consequence of these developments there is an increasing necessity to describe and define professional quality standards for threat management.

AETAP will be the body responsible for providing a clear set of guidelines when it concerns the certification of individual professionals in Europe providing threat assessment and management services, as well as for European based institutions (organizations) who have installed threat management expert teams and - systems.

In April 2010 in The Hague (The Netherlands) an AETAP certification working group was formed during their annual conference. The mission of this working group was defined as developing (1) quality standards, and (2) to describe an AETAP certification process for individuals as well as institutions.

## 1. The Quality Standards Committee

Clearly defined and highly set quality standards provide confidence in any certification process.

Under supervision of the AETAP board, a Quality Standard Committee (QSC) will be nominated. They will then function as an independent organ.

This group will take the overall responsibility for the certification process and will decide on policy matters relating to the operation of the whole process.

The QSC will nominate an international highly regarded group of threat assessment professionals, who will form the advisory board of the QSC. The AETAP board will advise the QSC.

In order to perform properly, the QSC has agreed to the following fundamental aspects in order to safeguard her position. The QSC:

- Will be responsible for decision making related to the granting, maintaining, extending, reducing, suspending and withdrawing certificates.
- Will have sufficient resources that are required for the operation of the certification system.
- Will provide a sufficient number of educated and experienced experts who can, under the strict supervision of the QSC, perform assessment activities for the certification. These are called the *auditing groups*. There should be auditing groups operating in different European languages as not every threat assessment professional in Europe speaks fluent English.
- Has developed and described a structure which safeguards impartiality. For instance, that every decision on the certification of individuals and organizations is taken by auditing experts other than those who had trained the individuals or installed the threat management system in the organization.
- Will report to the AETAP board on a regular basis and take their advise in serious consideration.

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## 1.1 Qualification for Auditing Groups

The following criteria have to be fulfilled by leaders of Auditing Groups and have to be submitted in written form to the AETAP Board and the QSC:

- Criminal Record  
Individuals with criminal records will not be allowed. Certification of national authorities should not be older than 6 months. Renewal of this certification is necessary after four years.
- AETAP Membership  
The professional has to be an active member of AETAP for at least one full year.
- Curriculum Vitae  
An (at least) 3-page CV of the professional career of the applicant should be provided in written form.
- Working experience in European countries  
The professional has to prove active threat assessment work in European countries, on a regular basis.
- Profession related to threat assessment  
The applicant should have a profession that makes it possible to actively work in threat assessment field (e.g. psychologist, psychiatrist, crime analysis, police investigator, social worker).  
He / she has working experience in this profession for at least five years. The candidate will have to provide a detailed documentation of professional experience in his CV.
- Professional experience  
The applicant has worked in an active and continuous position in the field of threat assessment for at least five consecutive years. He/she has been working as part of a threat assessment team, or as an individual threat assessment expert  
The applicant has worked in a leading role as a threat assessment expert in at least 50 cases. He/she has dealt with at least three different forms of problematic behavior (for instance: former partner stalking, targeted school violence, public figure threats, counterterrorism). The applicant has to provide an anonymous list of the 50 cases including the date of the assistance, a brief description of each case and the type of organization / client the professional has provided his assistance to.
- Interdisciplinary work  
The applicant has to prove practical experience with casework and cooperation with experts from at least three other (generally accepted) professions in these cases. Letters from these experts have to prove the cooperation.
- Specialized Training  
The applicant has had at least 12 days of specialized and professional threat assessment training provided by different AETAP recognized threat assessment experts. Furthermore, prove of 12 days attendance of threat assessment / management conferences with AETAP recognized speakers in the field<sup>1</sup> have to be provided. In addition to the above, the professional has attended 12 days training in topics related to threat assessment, e.g. violence risk assessment, and forms of psychopathology related to forensic issues. When the professional

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<sup>1</sup> AETAP will provide a list of recognized training organizations and experts in the field of threat assessment. When the applicant is referring to trainings not mentioned on this list he or she has to provide information that proves an acceptable quality standard.

can prove more than 12 days of threat assessment training, these days can make up for other categories.

- Knowledge of literature  
The applicant has proven detailed knowledge on recent and regarded threat assessment literature. A list of literature is provided and the professional is able to discuss the content of this literature with a member of the QSC (or an expert nominated by the QSC for this task). On the list should be at least 10 books and 25 scientific papers from the field of threat assessment and 5 books and 10 scientific papers from related literature.
  
- Background knowledge on threat assessment and management  
The expert can prove detailed knowledge on the following topics:
  - History of threat assessment
  - Multidisciplinary case work
  - Knowledge of psychopathology and its relationship to violent behavior
  - Concepts and definitions related to threat assessment
  - Theoretical models of threat assessment
  - Theory of aggression and violence
  - Violence risk prediction
  - Instruments of violence risk assessment and threat assessment (e.g. WAVR21, JACA, Stalking Risk Profile, DyRiAS)
  - Different forms of criminal behavior related to threat assessment (stalking, spousal homicide, public figure threats and attacks, targeted school / university violence, workplace violence, mass murder)
  - Threat management strategies
  - Specific aspects of organizational threat management
  - Is aware and respects the limitations of its own profession and has detailed knowledge of related fields of expertise that contributes to the field of threat assessment (e.g. psychology, police, legal, psychiatry)
  
- Project-based and/or scientific work  
The applicant can prove that he has played a significant role in setting up threat management programs and/or having participated scientific work.
  
- Development of threat assessment trainings  
The applicant has been involved with the design of threat assessment trainings and can submit trainings programs (with content) covering at least a time frame of four days.
  
- Performed trainings/presentations  
The applicant has given at least 30 presentations and/or trainings on threat assessment and management, to various institutions. A list has to be submitted with the topic, date, location, and institution where the presentation took place.

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## **1.2 Commitment to AETAP Rules, Ethic and Quality Standards**

The leader of the Auditing Group will commit him- or herself to all the rules and standards described by AETAP.

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## **1.3 Appeals, complaints and disputes**

Appeals, complaints and disputes regarding auditors shall be brought to the attention of the AETAP Board. The Board will keep a record of all of the above communications. The Board will take appropriate steps when necessary and also document these steps.

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#### **1.4 Renewal of Accreditation**

For the leader of the Auditing Group to maintain the AETAP accreditation and status, every two years he/she has to prove that 5 days of threat assessment training or attending threat assessment conferences, and that there is up-to-date knowledge on recent literature and research.

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#### **1.5 Suspension and Withdrawal of Certification and Accreditation**

If reliable and verified information reaches the Board of AETAP, that a certified individual, organization or accredited Auditing Group behaved in an unethical or unprofessional manner, the QSC has the right to suspend the certification and accreditation.

## 2. Individual Threat Assessment Professionals

### 2.1 Application

The following standards have to be fulfilled and submitted by the candidate in written form to an Auditing Group. The submission has to include an overview of the topics the applicant claims his/her specific expertise.

The different expert fields are:

- Stalking and spousal homicide
- Public figure threats and attacks
- Targeted school violence
- Targeted campus violence
- Workplace violence
- Terroristic Violence/ Radicalization

### 2.2 Qualification Criteria

The candidate has to meet the following criteria in order to obtain certification by AETAP:

- Criminal Record:  
Individuals with criminal records will not be allowed. Certification of national authorities should not be older than 6 months. Renewal of this certification is necessary after four years.
- Recommendation Letters  
One leading expert, recognized on an international level as experts in the field of threat assessment, have to provide a letter of recommendation. This letter has to confirm the professionalism and the integrity of the applicant.
- Curriculum Vitae  
A CV of the professional career of the applicant should be provided in written form.
- Professional experience  
The applicant should have a profession that makes it possible to actively work in threat assessment field (e.g. psychologist, psychiatrist, crime analysis, police investigator, social worker). He / she has working experience in this profession for at least 3 years. The candidate will have to provide a detailed documentation of professional experience in his CV.
- Practical Experience  
The applicant has worked in an active and continuous position in the field of threat assessment for at least three consecutive years. He is a member of AETAP. He/she has been working as part of a threat assessment team, or as an individual threat assessment expert, in at least 30 cases. The applicant has to provide an anonymous list of the 30 cases including, the date of

the assistance, a brief description of each case and the type of organization / client the professional has provided his assistance to.

- Interdisciplinary Work

The applicant has to prove practical experience with casework and cooperation with experts from at least two other (generally accepted) professions in these cases. Letters from these experts, including full address and contact data, have to prove the cooperation.

- Specialized Training

The applicant has had at least 9 days of specialized and professional threat assessment training provided by different AETAP recognized threat assessment experts. Furthermore, prove of 6 days attendance of threat assessment / management conferences with AETAP recognized speakers in the field<sup>2</sup> have to be provided. In addition to the above, the professional has attended 6 days training in topics related to threat assessment, e.g. violence risk assessment, and forms of psychopathology related to forensic issues. When the professional can prove more than 9 days of threat assessment training, these days can make up for other categories.

- Knowledge of literature

The applicant has proven detailed knowledge on recent and regarded threat assessment literature. A list of literature is provided and the professional is able to discuss the content of this literature with a member of the QSC (or an expert nominated by the QSC for this task). On the list should be at least 5 books and 10 scientific papers from the field of threat assessment and 2 books and 5 scientific papers from related literature.

- Specific fields of expertise

There are five different fields the candidate can prove his/her specialized knowledge. This will be specified on the certificate. Candidates can always apply for additional fields after the first certification.

The fields are:

- 1) Threats and Attacks against Public Figures
- 2) Targeted Violence in Schools
- 3) Targeted Violence in Universities
- 4) Stalking and Spousal Homicide and
- 5) Workplace Violence
- 6) Terroristic Violence/ Radicalization

In order to obtain certification in a specific field the candidate has to fulfill the following criteria:

- 1) At least three days of training in the specific field,
- 2) Ten cases of practical advisory work in the specific field, and
- 3) Detailed knowledge of literature in the specific field (which can be tested by the auditor)

- Background knowledge on threat assessment and management

The expert can prove a general knowledge of the following topics:

- History of threat assessment
- Multidisciplinary case work
- Knowledge of psychopathology and its relationship to violent behavior
- Concepts and definitions related to threat assessment
- Theoretical models of threat assessment
- Theory of aggression and violence
- Violence risk prediction

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<sup>2</sup> AETAP will provide a list of recognized training organizations and experts in the field of threat assessment. When the applicant is referring to trainings not mentioned on this list he or she has to provide information that proves an acceptable quality standard.

- Instruments of violence risk assessment and threat assessment (e.g. WAVR21, JACA, Stalking Risk Profile, DyRiAS, Trap18)
- Different forms of criminal behavior related to threat assessment (stalking, spousal homicide, public figure threats and attacks, targeted school / university violence, workplace violence, mass murder)
- Threat management strategies
- Specific aspects of organizational threat management
- Is aware and respects the limitations of its own profession and has detailed knowledge of related fields of expertise that contributes to the field of threat assessment (e.g. psychology, police, legal, psychiatry)

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### **2.3 Selection procedure**

The auditing group will assess the application and qualification of the candidate. The assessment will include:

- A review of the documentation provided by the candidate
- An interview on selected topics
- A written test, including the assessment of a case vignette

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### **2.4 Assessment personal records**

The AETAP certifier shall secure and maintain up-to-date records on the assessment of the certified professionals. The record will have at least the following content:

- Name and address
- Affiliation and professional position
- Educational qualification and professional status
- Documentation of experience and training in each field of competence
- Dates of receiving the updating records
- Review of certification and performance appraisal

The documents that served as a basis for certification, and all other relevant documentation, are kept secured in confidence by the AETAP Certifier.

The AETAP Board may for quality control randomly check the material.

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### **2.5 Changes in the certification requirements**

The AETAP Board shall give due notice of any intended changes related to the certification procedure. It shall seriously take account the views and opinions expressed by involved parties at the annual AETAP conference. The final decision will be communicated to all involved parties and be published on the AETAP website.

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### **2.6 Appeals, complaints and disputes**

Appeals, complaints and disputes regarding auditors shall be brought to the attention of the AETAP board. The Board will keep a record of all of the above communications and will take appropriate steps when necessary and also document these steps.

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## **2.7 Renewal of Certification**

In order to maintain the AETAP accreditation and status, the certified professional has to prove every two years that he/she has attended 5 days of threat assessment training or threat assessment conferences, and that there is up-to-date knowledge on recent literature and research.

Every two years the professional has to send in certificates of the trainings and conferences attended. The professional may be interviewed by the AETAP Certifier regarding his/her knowledge on new literature and scientific research.

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## **2.8 Suspending or Withdrawing Certification**

When reliable information reaches the Board of AETAP, that a certified individual behaved in an unethical or unprofessional manner, the Board has the authority to suspend the certification of the individual. The AETAP Board however has to list funded arguments.

## 3. Organizations & Institutions

### 3.1 Application

The organization has set up and introduced a threat assessment and management system in its organization. The organization applying for certification has to deliver a report to AETAP documenting its system.

There has to be a level of high-level expertise (either in-house or externally available to the organization) in the team of the organization. The organization will have to fulfill and submit the following criteria to be certified by AETAP.

### 3.2 Qualification criteria for Organizations

The following criteria shall be met by an organization to obtain certification by AETAP:

- Criminal Record  
There must be a written statement provided by the organization, which confirms that no member of the threat assessment / management team has a criminal background.
- Management Commitment and Policy  
Senior Management of the organization formally acknowledges the necessity of a threat management program by providing a written statement of intent. In this document there has to be a description of how the threat assessment and -management policy is promoted in the organization.
- Handbook, Process description and Strategies  
The organization shall present the organizational structure, the process and interactions with internal and external bodies. This shall be provided in written form. It will include a list of all internal and external stakeholders and the ongoing network process to ensure regular contacts and experience exchange. Detailed information on how risks are monitored has to be described. In addition the organization shall provide documentation about the strategies used in the organization. The system has to be operational for at least one year before official certification can be provided.
- Systematic threat assessment process  
The organization shall present documentation of (threat assessment) tools and procedures that are used.
- Case Documentation  
The organization shall present procedures of how case files are stored, secured and kept confidential.
- Professional experience  
The team members have a formal position that allows them to do threat assessment activities. The organization will provide a detailed documentation of the professional experience of the team members.

- Practical Knowledge  
Team members can prove state of the art and fundamental knowledge on threat assessment, and which steps should be taken for the initial response to threatening behavior.
- Specialized Training  
The individuals being responsible for the threat management in the organization have attended at least four days of specialized and professional threat assessment training.
- Awareness  
The organization shall present a description in written form of how awareness is created and maintained within the organization.
- Threat assessment expert fulfilling AETAP Standards  
The organization has a formalized working relation with a threat assessment expert fulfilling the AETAP quality standards. The expertise as well as the working relationship shall be formally documented.

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### **3.3 Assessment/Audit**

The Auditing Group will assess the qualifications of the organization. The assessment will include at least:

- A review of the documentation provided by the organization
- A set of interviews performed in the organization with the intention to check if the system is in place, working and fulfilling the AETAP requirements.

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### **3.4 Records of Certified Organizations**

The AETAP Certifiers shall possess and maintain up-to-date records on the certification of organizations. These consist of the:

- Name and address of organization
- Type of organization (description of the main activities)
- Documentation (handbook, processes, structure etc.)
- Date of certification

The documents that served as a basis for certification, and all other relevant documentation, are kept secured in confidence.

The AETAP Board may for quality control randomly check the material.

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### **3.5 Changes in the certification requirements**

The AETAP Board shall give due notice of any intended changes related to the certification procedure. It shall seriously take account the views and opinions expressed by involved parties at the annual AETAP conference. The final decision will be communicated to all involved parties and be published on the AETAP website.

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### **3.6 Appeals, complaints and disputes**

Appeals, complaints and disputes regarding auditors shall be brought to the attention of the AETAP board. The Board will keep a record of all of the above communications and will take appropriate steps when necessary and also document these steps.

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### **3.7 Renewal of Certification for Organizations**

In order to maintain the AETAP accreditation and status, the certified organization has to prove every two years that the members of the team have attended 5 days of threat assessment training or threat assessment conferences or have five days of case supervision by threat assessment expert fulfilling the AETAP quality standards, and that they have up-to-date knowledge on recent literature and research. The threat assessment and –management system has to be active and working.

The Auditing Group can do interviews with members of the organization and will report their findings to the AETAP Board.

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### **3.8 Suspending or Withdrawing Certification**

When reliable information reaches the Board of AETAP, that a member of the certified team certified behaved in an unethical or unprofessional manner, the Board has the authority to suspend the certification of the individual and however has to list funded arguments.