

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

about the Austrian SOLAS directory for users of Method 2 (Calculation Method)

What is the purpose of the directory?

The SOLAS Directive defines two possible methods of determining the total gross mass (VGM - Verified Gross Mass) of a container:

- (1) Method 1 – **Weighing**
- (2) Method 2 – **Calculation**

In Section 5.1.2.3 of the Annex to "SOLAS Directive" (hereinafter referred to as "Directive") is defined, that the Method used for weighing the container's contents under Method No.2 is subject to certification and approval as determined by the competent authority of the State in which the packing and sealing of the container was completed. How the certification is to be done will be up to the State concerned, and could pertain to **either the procedure for the weighing or to the party performing the weighing or both.**

Certification and, therefore, the registration of companies, which use Method 1 is not provided for in the Directive and thus also in Austria. Here the Directive refers to the national rules applicable, in which case for Austria, the RL 2014/31/EU, in particular, the Legal Metrology Act.

Following the European trend, Austria did not implement its own "SOLAS certification" for Method 2. Instead, the "**SOLAS suitability**" is derived from substitutive existing certifications of the companies concerned.

How is certification made in Austria?

The Method used for weighing the container's contents under Method No.2 is subject to certification and approval as determined by the competent authority of the State in which the packing and sealing of the container was completed.

The manner of certification is up to each state. In Austria the certification pertains to the party performing the weighing, not the procedure.

Regarding the approval certification for inclusion in the list, existing evidence in the company will be accepted, from which the trustworthiness of the company or the quality and trustworthiness of the operational process design can be derived.

Who has to register?

Any party that determines the VGM in Austria using Method 2 ("calculation") has to register.

What information should be communicated?

Company Data	
Company name	
Commercial Register N°	
Company Headquarters	
Street, House number	
Postal code	
Place	
SOLAS point of contact	
Name	
Telephone	
E-mail	

In addition, the directory will query whether you

- act as "shipper" in addition to the role as a method user against the shipping company within the meaning of the Directive or
- determine the VGM by method 2 as part of the internal procedures of your own company or as a service to a company as a so-called "third party".

In addition, there is the possibility that existing external certification of your company can be uploaded. The certificate and the comment should specify a.) the issuing body, b.) the scope of the certification, c.) the certificate number, and d.) the apparent period of validity.

The following certificates are provided as a suitable basis:

- **QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**
 - **EN ISO 9001** or **EN 29001**
 - **EN ISO 9004** or **EN 29004**
 - **EN ISO 22000**
 - **IFS** (International Featured Standards)
 - **HACCP-Approach** (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points)
- **ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS**
 - **ISO 14001**
 - **EMAS** (Eco Management and Audit Scheme)
- **CERTIFICATION IN SUSTAINABILITY**
 - **FSC** (Forest Stewardship Council)
 - **PEFC** (Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes)

- SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
 - ISO 28000

- CUSTOMS CERTIFICATES
(Authorized Economic Operator)
 - AEO C "Customs simplifications"
 - AEO S "Security"
 - AEO F "Customs Simplifications/Security"

No additional approval procedures are necessary in Austria.

At least one of the listed accreditations/certifications is needed for inclusion in the SOLAS directory.

Is there a need for the submission of a process description?

No. In Austria, the certification refers to the party that uses Method 2. Certification therefore does not refer to the certain procedure used. No process description of the VGM determination must be submitted.

What are the recognized company sites and what are the regulations for third parties?

The VGM calculation is admissible at all operating locations that are covered by the underlying certificate. It is also possible, that the VGM-calculation is done by a third-party, if this party has an approved certification.

Should the processes be documented?

The particular proof is necessary in the case of periodic audits (e.g. EN ISO 9001) or in the case of complaint. It is also required by the Directive.

What directory-information is visible to the public?

Details that are open to the public are the company name, the type of proof (certificate) and the date of the application, but no details than those - in particular information about the SOLAS contact person.

What certain competences should the SOLAS contact person have or do he or she require a separate training, special permissions etc.?

The SOLAS contact person of the Company only serves as a central information person for further questions about the application for the directory management authority (SCHIG).

If the directory management authority receives information about wrong VGM messages from a registered Austrian participant, it will contact the SOLAS contact person of the company in order to obtain a statement and seek ways to improve the procedures.

How does the application-procedure work?

- The application page is available at <http://rinf.schig.com:443/Anmeldung>. Once you have made all the necessary entries and uploaded the relevant documents, you will receive an automatically generated email, that the registration process has formally ended ("Application Acknowledgement").
- The documents submitted are checked by the responsible body.
- You will receive confirmation that your company has been included in the list.
- Your application is visible on the directory page (<http://rinf.schig.com:443/>) in alphabetical order.

Is there a registration fee?

No. There is no cost for admission to the directory.

Where can I direct questions concerning registration?

The focal point for directory issues is available at solas-vgm@schig.com. For all other questions regarding the contact topic, if necessary, send them to solas-vgm@bmvit.gv.at.

How long is the registration valid?

- The application is basically unlimited valid, as in the context of subsequent periodic audits (as EN ISO 9001) unsolicited proof is received that the necessary SOLAS processes were integrated into the company and the proof is quality assured, i.e. be audited within the next successor's audits.
- Misconduct: Provision of false VGM messages (see next question)

What happens if the directory management authority receives information indicating that a registered Austrian party has submitted wrong VGM messages?

Based on this information, the directory management authority will ask the registered company to comment and then – on this basis – the company should jointly initiate solutions for troubleshooting and quality improvement. In extreme cases, the company will be deleted from the directory.

When should existing certifications be adjusted according to the SOLAS processes?

The application is basically valid unlimitedly, as in the context of subsequent periodic audits (as EN ISO 9001) unsolicited proof is received that the necessary SOLAS processes were integrated into the company and the proof is quality assured, i.e. be audited within the next successor's audits.

Can the directory entry be deleted at the request of the company?

The deletion of the directory entry is possible at any time by submitting a formal letter with the company seal to the directory's management authority (solas-vgm@schig.com).