

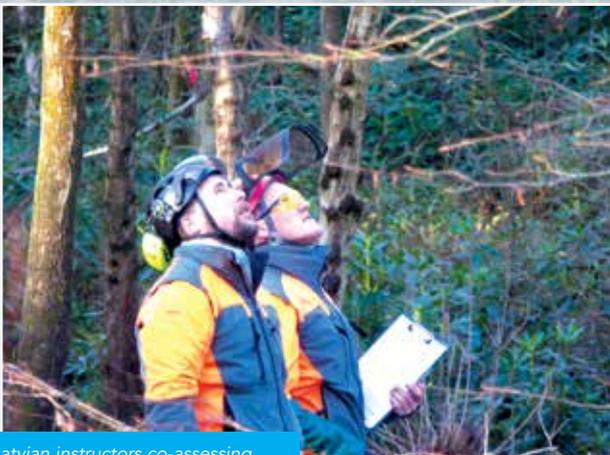
European chainsaw certification



Czech candidate during A1 assessment.



Slovenian candidate during A2 assessment.



Latvian instructors co-assessing during A1 assessment.

As a result of a European Commission-supported project (EAIOCOC) completed in 2011, the first ever European Chainsaw Certification standards were developed. Subsequently, a number of participating awarding bodies came together and developed the umbrella group ABA International (www.aba-skills.com) in 2012.

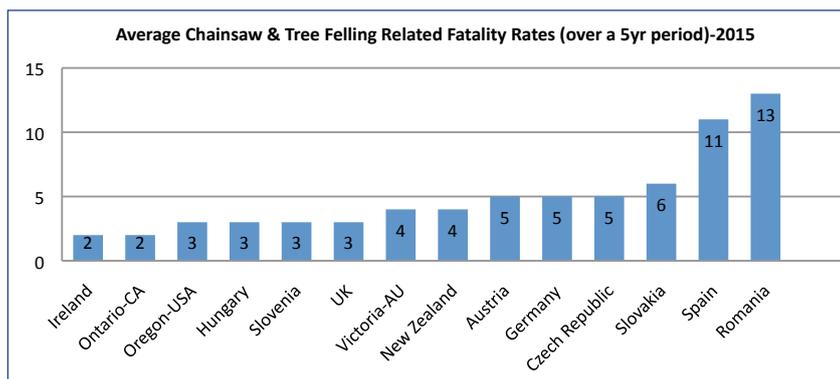
ABA International is a not-for-profit organisation primarily tasked with the management and quality assurance of occupational skills certification and recognition throughout Europe and worldwide. The Secretariat's headquarters are based at the centre of Europe in the Czech Republic. Key organisations include founding members the University of Copenhagen (Denmark) and the University of Mendel (Czech Republic). They pilot tested and successfully ran courses followed by assessments for the various ground-based chainsaw operator certificates from basic felling to advanced. These awards are as follows:

- CS1: Chainsaw maintenance and crosscutting techniques
- CS2: Basic tree felling techniques
- CS3: Advanced tree felling techniques
- CS4: Windblown and damaged tree felling techniques

Many more chainsaw operators have since obtained the ABA European Chainsaw Certificate due to the increasing number of new members actively involved with ABA. The award holders have been registered with an e-Passport on the international database with an expiry date for re-certification. Only certification that meets the minimum approved international standards can be registered, ensuring chainsaw operators from different countries are on a level playing field and should not therefore be required to undertake unnecessary equivalent training and assessment in a partner country. This has shown to reduce duplication of costs for chainsaw operators when working in another member country and provides greater transparency for employers of an individual's qualification levels and when they were obtained, via the 24/7 online international skills register. The ABA European Chainsaw Certificate can now be obtained through tuition and assessment by registered and approved ABA International assessors in partner countries which currently include Slovakia, Romania, Italy, Ireland, Great Britain, Slovenia, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Canada.

The Secretariat reported that the ABA European Chainsaw Certificate has increasingly been gaining recognition in non-member countries. For example, certificate holders have had their award recognised recently in France, Germany, Sweden and a number of other countries following enquiries from authorities and employers to the ABA Secretariat relating to validation of the qualifications. In the UK, the ABA European Chainsaw Certificate is supported and recognised by specialist insurance organisations such as Trust Insurance.

During a presentation given at the 2015 ABA General Assembly held in Vienna, a need to continue promoting safe standards for chainsaw operators was highlighted as part of a current joint ABA and Erasmus+ project-led research study into the factors behind accidents in the tree work industry.



(Source: National Statistics – Professional Loggers, W Robb – VET-Safety project report, 2016)

The current Erasmus+ project, VET-Safety, has identified a particular need for increased skills training and assessment in the non-professional logger sectors such as farming. For example, there is currently an average of 11 deaths per year in Slovenia in this sector which is nearly 4 times higher than the professional logger sector. Previous research from the EAIOCOC project indicated a need for increased skills training and assessment of chainsaw operators working at heights, particularly tree climbers/arborists.

In conjunction with ABA, the VET-Safety project team have developed and pilot tested two new European awards to address this need. This includes the first ever pan-European aerial chainsaw standards. This has been a natural evolution for the team behind the development of the ground-based European chainsaw standards. These awards are as follows:

- A1: Tree climbing, hand saw use and aerial rescue techniques
- A2: Tree climbing and aerial chainsaw techniques

Currently, a large number of international training instructors and assessors are registered and approved with ABA to deliver these awards via the respective awarding bodies in partner countries to the same agreed minimum standards. Monitoring and evaluation of ABA assessors is undertaken by a very experienced team of international verifiers. Many more potential assessors are at various stages of training and development in order to meet the approval criteria. A number of instructor/assessor events are run every year at various locations in different countries which include skills evaluations and assessor standard setting.

The most recent event was held in Great Britain and was hosted by Crawley Borough Council in early December 2015. Over 30 participants actively took part in a variety of skills activities during the intense 5-day event. Instructors came from Great Britain, Ireland, Hungary, Romania, Italy, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Poland and Latvia. Some undertook training and assessment in CS1, CS2, CS3, A1 & A2 whilst others were either technically evaluated, verified (qualified City&Guilds and Lantra Awards verifiers were part of the international verifier team present) or co-assessed under supervision.

Not all potential ABA-approved assessors were successful during the week with approximately 35% failing to meet the standards required. All successfully passed their first-aid assessment. It was decided by the ABA Standards & Accreditation



Italian and Latvian trainers discuss the A1 examination access methods.



Council, even though many held an existing national award in first-aid completed in their home country, to train and assess the instructors to a recognised UK standard.

As part of the VET-Safety project requirements, a number of instructors evaluated occupational standards necessary for chainsaw operators using mobile elevating work platforms mounted on a vehicle, supplied courtesy of County Tree Surgeons. Pilot testing will continue at locations throughout Europe, alongside further instructor assessor training events over the next year.

2016 ABA assessor training events are currently planned to be hosted in the following countries:

- April – Romania
- May – Slovenia
- June – Denmark
- September – the Czech Republic
- November – Italy

These events are open to all interested parties and further information is available via the ABA Secretariat. Additionally, an international conference, INPROFA 2016, is planned to take place on 6th and 7th September 2016 in the Czech Republic, supported by ABA International and the University of Mendel.

The two-day conference, which is based on the theme 'Innovations in Professional Practice within Forestry & Arboriculture', will include indoor presentations and outdoor workshops involving international expert skills trainers and leading researchers in their field.

Topics aim to integrate theory with 'hands-on' practice and will cover areas such as:

- 'The art of instruction' – presentations and outdoor demonstrations of up-to-date Canadian training methods in chainsaw operation and dangerous tree felling techniques.
- 'Monitoring tree reaction to the environment: sap flow and tree vitality' – a look into current Latvian pruning and transplanting research using state-of-the-art sap flow monitoring techniques.
- 'What's new in tree pest and disease control technology' – covering current UK research into the use of plant defence activators, chitin-based fertilisers, biological control, biochar and mulches etc.
- 'Tree safety inspection: techniques and current research' – possibilities and limitations of technical inspection methods; resistance drilling, sonic tomography, pull-tests of German research.
- 'Tree biomechanics and pruning techniques' – basics and details of species-specific wood anatomy, tree-biomechanics, wind load, pruning and cabling effects.
- 'Modern arboriculture and modern tree biology' – an Italian presentation looking into the development, history and current knowledge in this fascinating topic.
- 'ABA rope access and rescue techniques' – an international team of trainers and assessors demonstrate modern tree climbing methods approved for use in the new arborist level 1 & 2 examinations.
- 'LOLER rope inspector' – state-of-the-art novel joint research project from the UK and the Czech Republic.
- Forestry and arboricultural exhibitions will also include



Group photo of some of the CS2 candidates and assessors.



Romanian candidate during CS1 assessment.



Latvian and Romanian first aid candidates practice the recovery position.

modern skyline demonstrations, the forest horse in action and various other presentations and activities.

ABA International continues to undertake and collate research information that may provide insights into the continuing development of minimum international training and assessment standards. This is aimed at helping to prevent and reduce accidents and fatalities to chainsaw and other skilled operators. Current developments include an online knowledge hub providing up-to-date information, videos and links for registered skills instructors/assessors.