

# General terms and conditions for German tax advisors (*Steuerberater, Steuerbevollmächtigte*) and firms of tax advisors (*Steuerberatungsgesellschaften*) with declaration of consent

as of May 2018

These "general terms and conditions" shall govern contracts between German qualified tax advisors (*Steuerberater, Steuerbevollmächtigte*) as well as firms of tax advisors (*Steuerberatungsgesellschaften*) (hereinafter collectively referred to as the 'Tax Advisors', and each of them a 'Tax Advisor') and their clients (*Auftraggeber*), unless otherwise expressly agreed in text form (*Textform*) or prescribed by law.

## 1. Scope and execution of the engagement

- (1) The scope of the services to be rendered by the Tax Advisor shall be governed by the specific engagement. The engagement shall be executed in accordance with the principles of proper professional practice and in compliance with the relevant rules of professional conduct and professional obligations (cf. German Act Regulating the Profession of Tax Advisors [*Steuerberatungsgesetz – StBerG*] [hereinafter "*StBerG*"], German Professional Code of Conduct for Tax Advisors [*Berufordnung der Steuerberater – BOSTB*]).
- (2) Foreign law shall only be taken into account if this has been expressly agreed in text form.
- (3) In the event that the legal position changes after a matter has been conclusively completed, the Tax Advisor shall not be under any obligation to alert the client to such change or the resulting implications.
- (4) The review of the documents and figures provided to the Tax Advisor, in particular the accounts and balance sheet, with regard to accuracy, completeness and conformity with applicable rules shall not form part of the engagement unless otherwise expressly agreed in text form. The Tax Advisor will assume that the information provided by the client, in particular the figures, is correct and will use it as a basis for his/her work. To the extent that he/she detects any evident inaccuracies, the Tax Advisor shall be obliged to point them out.
- (5) The engagement shall not be deemed to constitute an authorization to represent the client before public authorities, courts and other bodies. Such authorization would need to be granted separately. Where, owing to the client's absence, it proves impossible to coordinate with him/her as to the filing of legal remedies, the Tax Advisor shall be deemed, in case of doubt, to be both authorized and obliged to take action with a view to meeting a deadline.

## 2. Duty of confidentiality

- (1) In accordance with the law, the Tax Advisor shall be under a duty to maintain confidentiality with regard to all facts that have come to his/her attention in connection with the execution of the engagement unless the client releases him/her from this duty. The duty of confidentiality shall continue even beyond a termination of the contractual relationship. The duty of confidentiality shall apply, to the same extent, to the Tax Advisor's staff.
- (2) The duty of confidentiality shall not apply to the extent that a disclosure is necessary in order to protect the Tax Advisor's legitimate interests. Furthermore, the Tax Advisor is hereby released from the duty of confidentiality to the extent that, under the terms and conditions of his/her professional liability insurance, he/she has a duty to provide information and cooperate.
- (3) The foregoing shall not affect any statutory rights to refuse to provide information or to refuse to testify under sect. 102 German General Tax Code (*Abgabenordnung – AO*), sect. 53 German Code of Criminal Procedure (*Strafprozessordnung – StPO*) and sect. 383 German Code of Civil Procedure (*Zivilprozessordnung – ZPO*).
- (4) The Tax Advisor is hereby released from the duty of confidentiality to the extent that (i) this is necessary for purposes of carrying out a certification audit in the Tax Advisor's firm and (ii) the individuals who are acting in this regard, for their part, have been instructed as to their duty of confidentiality. The client hereby agrees that the person carrying out the certification/audit may inspect the client file which was created and is being maintained by the Tax Advisor.

## 3. Involvement of third parties

The Tax Advisor shall be entitled to involve staff ('persons employed in performing a contractual obligation for whom the Tax Advisor is vicariously liable' [*Erfüllungshelfen*] [hereinafter the 'Vicarious Agents']), third-party experts (e.g. additional Tax Advisors, auditors, German qualified attorneys [*Rechtsanwälte*]) as well as data-processing companies for purposes of executing the engagement to the extent that the client has given his/her prior consent. When bringing in third-party experts and data-processing companies, the Tax Advisor shall ensure that they give an undertaking to maintain confidentiality in accordance with clause 2(1) above to the extent that they are not already subject to a duty of confidentiality under rules of professional conduct. The Tax Advisor shall be liable for his/her staff in accordance with sect. 278 German Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch – BGB*) (hereinafter "*BGB*"). The Tax Advisor shall not bear any liability in relation to the services provided by third-party experts and data-processing companies; for purposes of liability law, such experts/companies shall not constitute Vicarious Agents of the Tax Advisor. Separate contractual relationships, along with corresponding liability-related provisions, will be entered into between such experts/companies and the client. Where the Tax Advisor has recommended the involvement of a third-party expert or data-processing company whom the Tax Advisor has identified by name, the Tax Advisor shall only be liable for his/her having duly selected them.

## 3a. Electronic communication, data protection<sup>1)</sup>

- (1) In the context of the engagements, the Tax Advisor shall be entitled to electronically collect personal data of the client staff and to process such data in an automated file or to transmit such data to a service computer center for further processing of the data related to the engagement.
- (2) In order to satisfy his/her obligations under the EU General Data Protection Regulation (hereinafter "*GDPR*") and the German Federal Data Protection Act (*Bundesdatenschutzgesetz – BDSG*), the Tax Advisor shall be entitled to appoint a data-protection officer. Unless this data-protection officer is already subject to a duty of confidentiality under clause 2(1) sent. 3 above, the Tax Advisor shall ensure that the data-protection officer, upon taking up his/her activity, shall undertake to maintain data secrecy.
- (3) To the extent that the client wants to communicate with the Tax Advisor via a fax line or an e-mail address, the client must share in the costs for setting up and maintaining the use of signature procedures and encryption procedures of the Tax Advisor (e.g. for acquiring and setting up any necessary software and/or hardware).

## 4. Remedying of deficiencies

- (1) The client shall have a right to demand that any deficiencies be remedied. The Tax Advisor must be afforded an opportunity to take remedial action. If and to the extent that the engagement constitutes a contract for services (*Dienstvertrag*) within the meaning of sects. 611, 675 BGB, the client may refuse any remedial action by the Tax Advisor if the engagement is terminated by the client and the deficiency is detected only after the engagement has been validly terminated.
- (2) Should the Tax Advisor fail to remedy the asserted deficiencies within a reasonable period or refuse to remedy the deficiencies, then the client may, at the Tax Advisor's expense, have the deficiencies remedied by another Tax Advisor and/or — at the client's choice — demand a reduction of the fees or rescission of the contract.
- (3) The Tax Advisor may at any time, also vis-à-vis third parties, correct obvious inaccuracies (e.g. clerical errors, or errors in calculation). Other deficiencies may be corrected by the Tax Advisor vis-à-vis third parties subject to the client's consent. Such consent shall not be required where the Tax Advisor's legitimate interests take precedence over the client's interests.

## 5. Liability

- (1) The liability of the Tax Advisor and his/her Vicarious Agents for any loss/damage resulting from one breach of duty or — in the context of a uniform injurious effect (*einheitliche Schadensfolge*) — from several breaches of duty on the occasion of executing an engagement shall be capped at EUR \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2)</sup> (in words: \_\_\_\_\_ euros). The limitation of liability shall apply in relation to negligence only; liability for intent shall not be subject to such limitation. Liability claims in relation to any loss/damage arising from injuries to life, body or health shall be excluded from this limitation of liability. The limitation of liability shall apply to the Tax Advisor's entire activity for the client, i.e. also, in particular, to an extension to the scope of the engagement; in this regard, there shall be no need for agreeing the limitation of liability again. The limitation of liability shall also apply in the case of the establishment of a joint practice (*Sozietät*) / partnership company (*Partnerschaft*) and assumption of the engagement by the joint practice / partnership company as well as for partners who join the joint practice / partnership company. Furthermore, the limitation of liability shall also apply vis-à-vis third parties to the extent that these fall within the scope of protection of the engagement; in this regard, sect. 334 BGB is expressly not waived. Any agreements, contained in individual contracts, providing for a limitation of liability shall take precedence over this provision but — unless otherwise expressly stipulated — shall not affect the validity of this provision.

1) Moreover, for purposes of the processing of personal data, a legal basis under art. 6 EU General Data Protection Regulation ("*GDPR*") must be applicable. That norm merely lists the legal bases for a lawful processing of personal data. In addition, the Tax Advisor must fulfill the duty to provide certain information, under sects. 13 or 14 GDPR, by way of furnishing additional information. In this regard please note the comments and explanations contained in the instruction leaflet regarding the forms pertaining to data protection law.

2) Please insert amount as appropriate. In order to be able to take advantage of this provision, an amount of at least EUR 1 million must be specified, and the contractual amount insured must be at least EUR 1 million for the individual damage event; otherwise clause 5 needs to be deleted. In that case it must be seen to it that the liability-related agreement to be reached in the form of an individual contract contain a provision that corresponds to clause 5(2). Please also refer to the further comments contained in instruction leaflet no. 1001.

