ISO 26000
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

ISO 26000 project overview

ISO – the International Organization for Standardization

ISO has a membership of 163* national standards bodies from countries large and small, industrialized, developing and in transition, in all regions of the world. ISO's portfolio of over 18 400* standards provides business, government and society with practical tools for all three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social.

ISO standards make a positive contribution to the world we live in. They facilitate trade, spread knowledge, disseminate innovative advances in technology, and share good management and conformity assessment practices.

ISO standards provide solutions and achieve benefits for almost all sectors of activity, including agriculture, construction, mechanical engineering, manufacturing, distribution, transport, medical devices, information and communication technologies, the environment, energy, quality management, conformity assessment and services.

ISO only develops standards for which there is a clear market requirement. The work is carried out by experts in the subject drawn directly from the industrial, technical and business sectors that have identified the need for the standard, and which subsequently put the standard to use. These experts may be joined by others with relevant knowledge, such as representatives of government agencies, testing laboratories, consumer associations and academia, and by international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

An ISO International Standard represents a global consensus on the state of the art in the subject of that standard.

* At the end of September 2010.
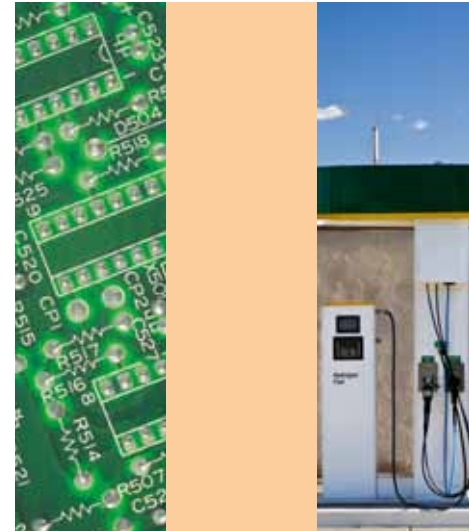
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The International Standard ISO 26000, *Guidance on social responsibility*, provides harmonized, globally relevant guidance for private and public sector organizations of all types based on international consensus among expert representatives of the main stakeholder groups, and so encourages the implementation of best practice in social responsibility worldwide.

ISO 26000 both adds value to existing work on social responsibility (SR) and extends the understanding and implemention of SR by:

- Developing an international consensus on what SR means and the SR issues that organizations need to address

- Providing guidance on translating principles into effective actions

- Refining best practices that have already evolved and disseminating the information worldwide for the good of the international community.

What is ISO 26000 ?

ISO 26000 is an ISO International Standard giving guidance on SR. It is intended for use by organizations of all types, in both public and private sectors, in developed and developing countries, as well as in economies in transition. It will assist them in their efforts to operate in the socially responsible manner that society increasingly demands.

ISO 26000 contains voluntary guidance, not requirements, and therefore is not for use as a certification standard like ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 14001:2004.

Social responsibility : 7 core subjects

Holistic approach

6.8*
Community
involvement
and development

6.3*
Human rights

6.2* Organizational

6.7*
Consumer
issues

ORGANIZATION

6.4*
Labour
practices

governance

6.6*
Fair operating
practices

6.5*
The environment

Interdependence

* The figures denote the corresponding clause numbers in ISO 26000.

Why is ISO 26000 important ?

Sustainable business for organizations means not only providing products and services that satisfy the customer, and doing so without jeopardizing the environment, but also operating in a socially responsible manner.

Pressure to do so comes from customers, consumers, governments, associations and the public at large. At the same time, far-sighted organizational leaders recognize that lasting success must be built on credible business practices and the prevention of such activities as fraudulent accounting and labour exploitation.

On the one hand, there has been a number of high-level declarations of principle related to SR and, on the other, there are many individual SR programmes and initiatives. The challenge is how to put the principles into practice and how to implement SR effectively and efficiently when even the understanding of what "social responsibility" means may vary from one programme to another. In addition, previous initiatives have tended to focus on "corporate social responsibility", while ISO 26000 will provide SR guidance not only for business organizations, but also for public sector organizations of all types.

ISO's expertise is in developing harmonized international agreements based on double levels of consensus – among the principal categories of stakeholder, and among countries (ISO is a network of the national standards bodies of 163 countries).

ISO 26000 distils a globally relevant understanding of what social responsibility is and what organizations need to do to operate in a socially responsible way.

Photo : Richard Human

How will ISO 26000 help organizations ?

ISO 26000 will help all types of organization – regardless of their size, activity or location – to operate in a socially responsible manner by providing guidance on :

- Concepts, terms and definitions related to social responsibility

- Background, trends and characteristics of social responsibility

- Principles and practices relating to social responsibility

- Core subjects and issues of social responsibility

- Integrating, implementing and promoting socially responsible behaviour throughout the organization and, through its policies and practices, within its sphere of influence

- Identifying and engaging with stakeholders

- Communicating commitments, performance and other information related to social responsibility.

What does ISO 26000 contain ?

The content of ISO 26000 is structured as follows :

Foreword

Introduction

1 Scope

2 Terms and definitions

3 Understanding social responsibility

4 Principles of social responsibility

5 Recognizing social responsibility and engaging stakeholders

6 Guidance on social responsibility core subjects

7 Guidance on integrating social responsibility throughout an organization

Annex A – Examples of voluntary initiatives and tools for social responsibility

Annex B – Abbreviated terms

Bibliography

The guidance provided in these sections is intended to be clear and understandable – even to non-specialists – as well as objective and applicable to all types of organization, including big business and small and medium-sized enterprises, public administrations and governmental organizations.

How does ISO 26000 relate to existing good work ?

The guidance in ISO 26000 draws on best practice developed by existing public and private sector SR initiatives. It is consistent with and complements relevant declarations and conventions by the United Nations and its constituents, notably the International Labour Organization (ILO), with whom ISO has established a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to ensure consistency with ILO labour standards. ISO has also signed MoUs with the United Nations Global Compact Office (UNGCO) and with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to enhance their cooperation on the development of ISO 26000.

How did the ISO 26000 initiative come about ?

The need for ISO to work on an SR standard was first identified in 2001 by ISO/COPOLCO, Committee on consumer policy. In 2003, the multi-stakeholder ISO Ad Hoc Group on SR which had been set up by ISO's Technical Management Board (TMB) completed an extensive overview of SR initiatives and issues worldwide.

In 2004, ISO held an international, multi-stakeholder conference on whether or not it should launch SR work. The positive recommendation of this conference led to the establishment in late 2004 of the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility (ISO/WG SR) to develop the future ISO 26000 standard.

What will ISO 26000 achieve ?

ISO 26000 will integrate international expertise on social responsibility – what it means, what issues an organization needs to address in order to operate in a socially responsible manner, and what is best practice in implementing SR. ISO 26000 will be a powerful SR tool to assist organizations to move from good intentions to good actions.

Who developed ISO 26000 ?

The membership of the ISO/WG SR was the largest and the most broadly based in terms of stakeholder representation of any single group formed to develop an ISO standard.

Six main stakeholder groups were represented : industry ; government ; labour ; consumers: nongovernmental organizations ; service, support, research and others, as well as a geographical and gender-based balance of participants.

Under the joint leadership of the ISO members for Brazil (ABNT) and Sweden (SIS), it was made up of experts from ISO members (national standards bodies – NSBs) and from liaison organizations (associations representing business, consumers or labour, or inter-governmental or nongovernmental organizations). Membership was limited to a maximum of six experts per NSB and two experts per liaison organization.

In July 2010, the ISO/WG SR had 450 participating experts and 210 observers from 99 ISO member countries and 42 liaison organizations.
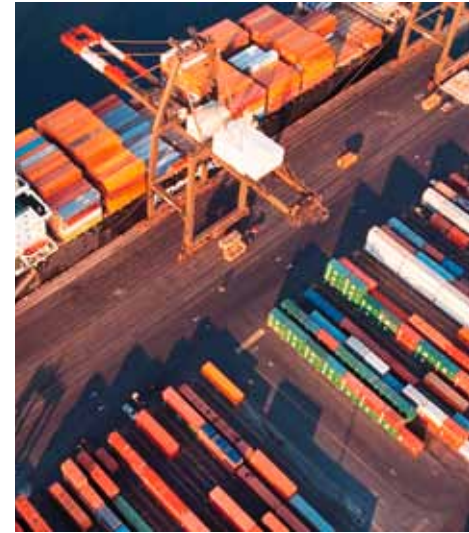
Participating countries

The ISO national members bodies (NSBs) of the following 83 countries (the acronyms of the NSBs appear in brackets) nominated experts to participate :

Argentina (IRAM)	**Denmark** (DS)	**Kuwait** (KOWSMD)	**Saudi Arabia** (SASO)
Armenia (SARM)	**Ecuador** (INEN)	**Lebanon** (LIBNOR)	**Serbia** (ISS)
Australia (SA)	**Egypt** (EOS)	**Libya** (LNCSM)	**Singapore** (SPRING SG)
Austria (ON)	**Fiji** (FTSQCO)	**Luxembourg** (ILNAS)	**South Africa** (SABS)
Bahrain (BSMD)	**Finland** (SFS)	**Malaysia** (DSM)	**Spain** (AENOR)
Bangladesh (BSTI)	**France** (AFNOR)	**Mauritius** (MSB)	**Sri Lanka** (SLSI)
Barbados (BNSI)	**Germany** (DIN)	**Mexico** (DGN)	**Sweden** (SIS)
Belarus (BELST)	**Ghana** (GSB)	**Mongolia** (MASM)	**Switzerland** (SNV)
Belgium (NBN)	**Greece** (ELOT)	**Morocco** (SNIMA)	**Syria** (SASMO)
Brazil (ABNT)	**India** (BIS)	**Netherlands** (NEN)	**Tanzania** (TBS)
Bulgaria (BDS)	**Indonesia** (BSN)	**Nigeria** (SON)	**Thailand** (TISI)
Canada (SCC)	**Iran** (ISIRI)	**Norway** (SN)	**Trinidad and Tobago** (TTBS)
Cameroon (CDNQ)	**Ireland** (NSAI)	**Oman** (DGSM)	**Tunisia** (INNORPI)
Chile (INN)	**Israel** (SII)	**Panama** (COPANIT)	**Turkey** (TSE)
China (SAC)	**Italy** (UNI)	**Peru** (INDECOPI)	**Ukraine** (DSSU)
Colombia (ICONTEC)	**Jamaica** (JBS)	**Philippines** (BPS)	**United Arab Emirates** (ESMA)
Côte d´Ivoire (CODINORM)	**Japan** (JISC)	**Poland** (PKN)	**United Kingdom** (BSI)
Croatia (HZN)	**Jordan** (JISM)	**Portugal** (IPQ)	**Uruguay** (UNIT)
Czech Republic (CNI)	**Kazakhstan** (KAZMEMST)	**Qatar** (QS)	**USA** (ANSI)
Costa Rica (INTECO)	**Kenya** (KEBS)	**Russian Federation** (GOST R)	**Vietnam** (TCVN).
Cuba (NC)	**Korea, Republic of** (KATS)	**Saint Lucia** (SLBS)	

Observer countries

The ISO members of the 16 following countries (the acronyms of the NSBs appear in brackets) observed the work of the ISO/WG SR :

Azerbaijan (AZSTAND)	**Estonia** (EVS)
Romania (ASRO)	**Bolivia** (IBNORCA)
Cyprus (CYS)	**HongKong, China** (ITCHKSAR)
Lithuania (LST)	**Latvia** (LVS)
New Zealand (SNZ)	**Malawi** (MBS)
Senegal (ASN)	**Palestine** (PSI)
Slovakia (SUTN)	**Zimbabwe** (SAZ)
Guatemala (COGUANOR)	**Uganda** (UNBS).

Liaison organizations

The 42 following organizations had liaison status with the ISO/WG SR and nominated experts to participate in its work :

AccountAbility

AICC (African Institute of Corporate Citizenship)

AIHA (American Industrial Hygiene Association)

BIAC (The Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)

CI (Consumers International)

EBEN (European Business Ethics Network)

EC (European Commission)

ECOLOGIA (Ecologists Linked for Organizing Grassroots Initiatives and Action)

EFQM

EIRIS Foundation EIRIS (Ethical Investment Research Services) Ltd.

FIABCI (International Real Estate Federation)

Forum Empresa/Ethos Institute

FLA (Fair Labor Association)

GRI (Global Reporting Initiative)

IABC (International Association of Business Communicators)

ICC (International Chamber of Commerce)

ICMM (International Council of Mining and Metals)

IEPF (Institute for Energy and Environment of the French speaking countries)

IFAN (International Federation of Standards Users)

IIED (International Institute for Environmental and Development)

IISD (International Institute for Sustainable Development)

ILO (International Labour Organization)

INLAC (Latin-American Institute for Quality Assurance)

Interamerican CSR Network

IOE (International Organization of Employers)

IPIECA (International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association

ISEAL Alliance (International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling)

ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation)

NORMAPME (European Office of Crafts, Trades and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises for Standardisation)

OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development)

OGP (International Association of Oil and Gas Producers)

Red Puentes

SAI (Social Accountability International)

Transparency International

UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme)

UNSD (United Nations Division for Sustainable Development)

UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development)

UN Global Compact

UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organization)

WBCSD (World Business Council on Sustainable Development)

WHO (World Health Organization)

WSBI (World Savings Banks Institute)/**ESBG** (European Savings Banks Group).

ISO internal liaisons

The following ISO standards-developing technical committees (TCs) had internal liaison status with the ISO/WG SR :

ISO/TC 159, *Ergonomics*
ISO/TC 173, *Assistive products for persons with disability*
ISO/TC 176, *Quality management and quality assurance*
ISO/TC 207, *Environmental management.*

Photo : Stuart Forster

Resources

- ISO's national member bodies, which are listed with full contact details on the ISO Website at **www.iso.org/isomembers**

- The companion brochure, *Discovering ISO 26000*, which is available from ISO national member bodies and from the ISO Central Secretariat **sales@iso.org**

- The ISO Website **www.iso.org** See the home page and click on the section " Management and leadership standards ". This brochure and *Discovering ISO 26000* can be accessed free of charge as HTML and PDF files on this section at **www.iso.org/sr**

- *ISO Focus+* magazine **www.iso.org/isofocus+**