

ISO and Social Responsibility



- ISO has launched the development of the future ISO 26000 standard providing voluntary guidance on Social Responsibility (SR).
- ISO 26000 will be for organizations of all types in both public and private sectors, in developed and developing countries.
- ISO 26000 will add value to existing SR work by :
 - developing an international consensus on what SR means and the SR issues that organizations need to address,
 - providing guidelines on translating principles into effective actions, and
 - distilling the best practice that has already evolved and disseminating it worldwide for the good of the international community.

ISO 26000 will add value to existing initiatives for Social Responsibility by providing harmonized, globally relevant guidance based on international consensus among expert representatives of the main stakeholder groups and so encourage the implementation of best practice in Social Responsibility worldwide.



What is ISO 26000 ?

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

ISO 26000 contains guidelines, not requirements, and therefore will not be for use as a certification standard like ISO 9001:2000 and ISO 14001:2004.

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.

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 156* countries).

The future ISO 26000 will distil a globally relevant understanding of what Social Responsibility is and what organizations need to do to operate in a socially responsible way.

What will ISO 26000 contain ?

The detailed content of ISO 26000 will evolve throughout its development process. However, its “design specification” has already been agreed upon and covers the following :

0 Introduction

1 Scope

2 Normative references

3 Terms and definitions

4 The SR context in which all organizations operate

5 SR principles relevant to organizations

6 Guidance on core SR subjects/issues

7 Guidance for organizations on implementing SR

8 Guidance annexes

Bibliography

* At 1 April 2006



The guidance in ISO 26000 is intended to be clear and understandable, even to non-specialists, objective, and applicable to all types of organization, both business and governmental.

How will ISO 26000 relate to existing good work ?

The guidance in ISO 26000 will draw on best practice developed by existing public and private sector SR initiatives. It will be consistent with and complement 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 to ensure consistency with ILO labour standards.

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 (WG SR) to develop the future ISO 26000 standard.

Who is developing ISO 26000 ?

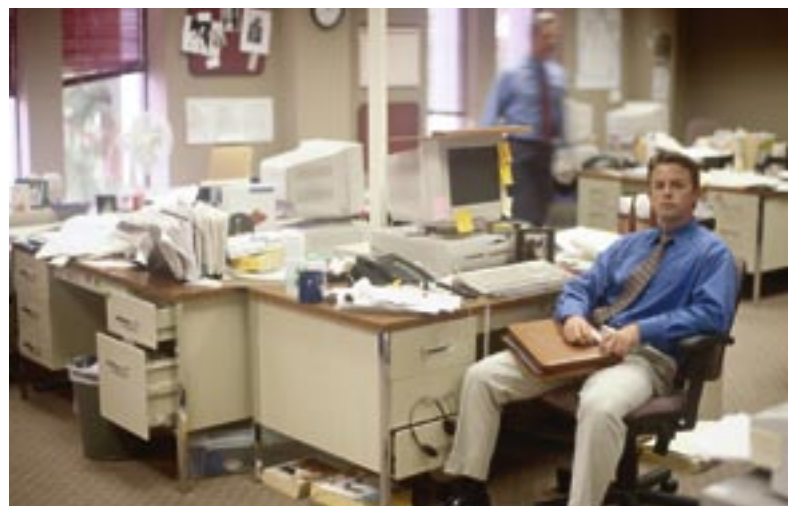
Fifty-four countries and 33 organizations with liaison status are participating in the WG SR under the joint leadership of the ISO members for Brazil (ABNT) and Sweden (SIS). The main stakeholder groups are represented : industry, government, labour, consumers, nongovernmental organizations, service, support, research and others, as well as a geographical and gender-based balance of participants.

When will ISO 26000 be ready ?

ISO 26000 is currently targeted for publication in late 2008.

What will ISO 26000 achieve ?

ISO 26000 will be a distillation of 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.



For more information on ISO 26000 and the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility :

www.iso.org/sr

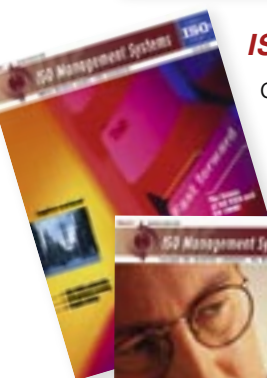
This Web site includes documents giving the background to ISO's SR initiative, documents and press releases on the progress of the work and how it is being carried out, the membership and structure of the WG SR, how to participate in the development of ISO 26000, a newsletter, development timeframe, FAQs, contacts and other information.

Two magazines to read :



ISO Focus, a panoramic view of standards and related issues : what is being done, why it is being done, what will be done and how it affects you. Published in English.

www.iso.org/isofocus



ISO Management Systems, Worldwide coverage of ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 developments. *Plus* new standards initiatives for important business and societal issues such as Social Responsibility, sustainability, occupational health and safety, and conformity assessment. *Plus* sector developments and national initiatives. Published in English, French and Spanish.

www.iso.org/ims

About ISO

- ISO is the world's leading developer of International Standards.
- ISO standards specify the requirements for state-of-the-art products, services, processes, materials and systems, and for good conformity assessment, managerial and organizational practice.
- ISO standards are designed to be implemented worldwide.

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ISBN 92-67-10422-5 • © ISO, 2006-04/3 000