PECB

When Recognition Matters

WHITEPAPER

ISO 26000

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

CONTENT

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations all around the world, including their stakeholders, are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of social responsibility. This is mainly due to the increase of public awareness for organizations to act in a responsible manner towards their employees, customers and other stakeholders.

ISO 26000, launched in 2010, encourages organizations to identify and select relevant strategies to implement towards improvement of their relationship to the society and environment in which they operate. This International Standard is intended to be beneficial to all types of organizations in the private, public and nonprofit sectors, whether large or small, and whether operating in developed or developing countries.

The ISO 26000 provides guidelines for social responsibility (SR) for all types of organizations worldwide.

The ISO 26000 is a voluntary standard that maps out a framework, which an organization can follow to set up an effective and efficient implementation of the ISO 26000 standard.

The ISO 26000 is advantageous to any organization, which wants to improve its accountability, transparency, ethical behavior and in general respecting the stakeholder interests.

By implementing the ISO 26000 standard, organizations enhance their positive image of the organization in relation to business and government affairs and also against local communities. The ISO 26000 may apply to an entire organization, or an operating unit, and it is required to conduct a periodic review and evaluation of the ISO 26000 to identify issues and opportunities for continual improvement.

The ISO 26000 can provide assurance to company management and employees as well as external stakeholders concerning the measurement and improvement of social responsibility.

Recognizing that organizations are at various stages of understanding and integrating social responsibility, this International Standard is intended for use by beginners, as well as those more experienced with its implementation.
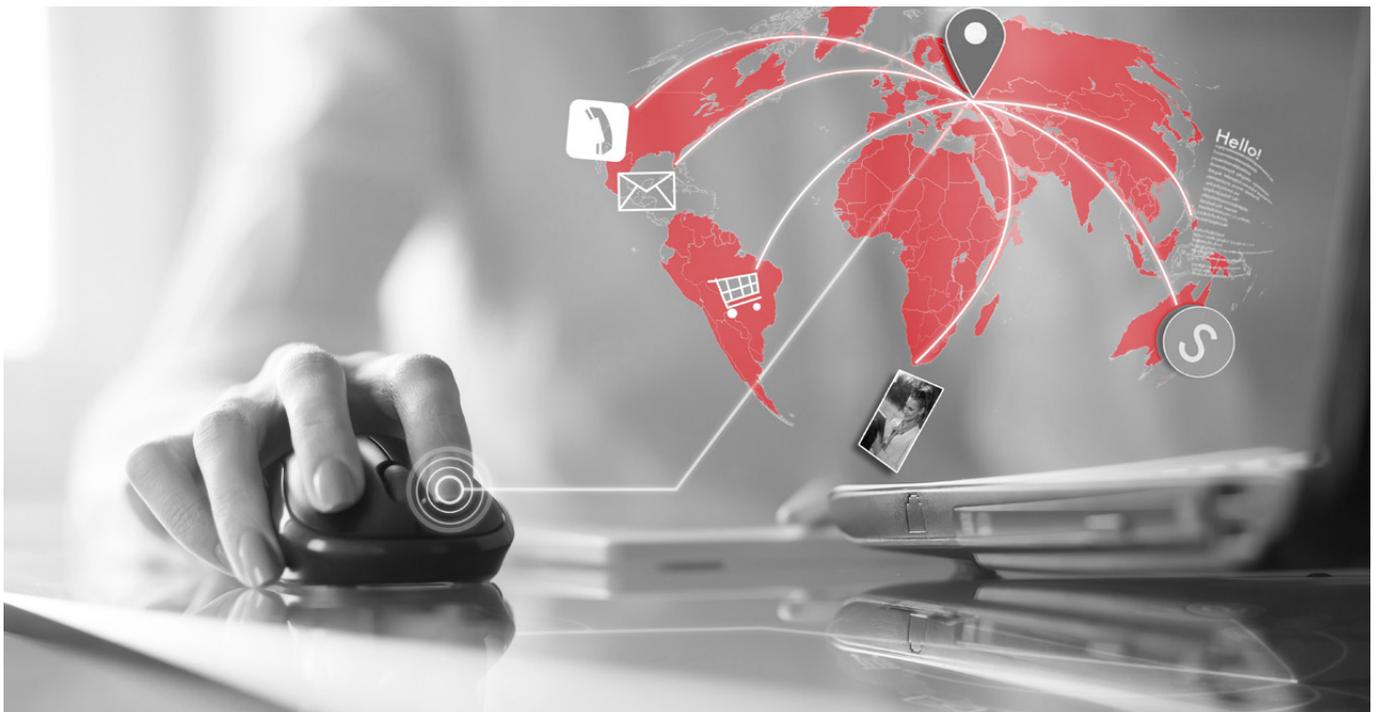
An overview of ISO 26000:2010

The ISO 26000 standard is not a management standard, as it is not intended for certification purposes or regulatory or contractual use. Correspondingly, this standard cannot be used as a base for audits, conformity tests, certificates or for any other kinds of compliance requirements. This standard is focused on the acquisition of knowledge related to the context and applicability of social responsibility, and not on the acquisition of an expertise in social responsibility.

This International Standard provides guidance on the underlying principles of social responsibility, the core subjects and issues pertaining to social responsibility and on ways to integrate socially responsible behavior into existing organizational strategies, systems, practices and processes.

Social Responsibility is improved with ISO 26000 by incorporating:

- Guidelines applicable to any organization wishing to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of its processes related to social responsibility.
- The understanding of the underlying principles of social responsibility.
- The two fundamental practices of social responsibility; through recognizing social responsibility and through stakeholder identification and management.
- Social responsibility core subjects through organizational governance, related actions and expectations, by understanding:
    - o human rights,
    - o labor practices,
    - o the environment,
    - o fair operating practices,
    - o and consumer issues and community involvement and development.
- Integration of social responsibility throughout an organization.

ISO 26000 applies to all types and sizes of organizations that wish to:

1. Behave in a socially responsible way;
2. Act in an ethical and transparent way that contributes to the health and welfare of society;
3. Transform SR principles into effective actions by sharing best practices relating to social responsibility;
4. Assure compliance with national, regional and international laws and treaties;
5. Increase confidence of clients, business partners and other interested parties;
6. Make a self-determination and self-declaration of conformity with this International Standard.

As ISO 26000 does not contain requirements for certification and does not contain a management system, the practical value of ISO 26000 might be limited if it merely provided a common understanding of social responsibility, instead of also facilitating management routines and practices leading to social responsibility. Despite being a non-certifiable standard, a few distinct elements of a management system can be identified in this standard.

Key clauses of ISO 26000:2010

ISO 26000 is organized into the following main clauses:

Clause 4: Principles of social responsibility
Clause 5: Recognizing social responsibility and engaging stakeholders
Clause 6: Guidance on social responsibility core subjects
Clause 7: Guidance on integrating social responsibility throughout an organization

Clause 4: Principles of social responsibility

This clause provides guidance on seven principles of social responsibility.

Accountability: Describes how an organization should be accountable for its impacts on society, the economy and the environment.
Transparency: Guides on how an organization should be transparent in its decisions and activities that impact on society and the environment.
Ethical behavior: Guides on how organizations should behave based on the values of honesty, equity and integrity.
Respect for stakeholder interests: Guides on how an organization should respect, consider and respond to the interests of its stakeholders.
Respect for the rule of law: States that an organization should accept that respect for the rule of law is mandatory.
Respect for international norms of behavior: Describes that an organization should respect international norms of behavior, while adhering to the principle of respect for the rule of law.
Respect for human rights: Describes that an organization should respect human rights and recognize both their importance and their universality.

Clause 5: Recognizing social responsibility and engaging stakeholders

This clause addresses two fundamental practices of social responsibility:

The recognition by an organization of its social responsibility: involves identifying the issues raised by the impacts of an organization's decisions and activities, as well as the way these issues should be addressed so as to contribute to sustainable development.

The organization's identification of, and engagement with, its stakeholders: implies that an organization should respect and consider the interests of its stakeholders that will be affected by its decisions and activities.

Clause 6: Guidance on social responsibility core subjects

This clause guides the organization in addressing the core subjects (described below), by defining the scope of its social responsibility, identifying relevant issues and in setting its priorities:

- Organizational governance: a system by which an organization makes and implements decisions in pursuit of its objectives.
- Human rights: organizations should respect the basic rights to which all human beings are entitled.
- Labour practices: follows the policies and practices relating to work performed within, by or on behalf of the organization.
- The environment: describes the environmental impact of the decisions and activities of organizations no matter where the organizations are located.
- Fair operating practices; guides on ethical conduct in an organization's dealings with other organizations.
- Consumer issues: describes the context in which the organizations should behave in relation to consumers and customers.
- Community involvement and development: guides on the relationship between organizations and communities.

Clause 7: Guidance on intergrating social responsibility throughout an organization

This clause provides guidance on putting social responsibility into practice in an organization. Generally, organizations can build on existing systems, policies, structures and networks of the organization to put social responsibility into practice. It guides on the areas of:

- The relationship of an organization's characteristics to social responsibility;
- Understanding the social responsibility of the organization;
- Practices for integrating social responsibility throughout an organization;
- Communication on social responsibility;
- Enhancing credibility regarding social responsibility;
- Reviewing and improving an organization's actions and practices related to social responsibility;
- Voluntary initiatives for social responsibility.

Link between ISO 26000 and other standards

ISO 26000 can be aligned with, and is compatible with, the ISO 9000 and ISO 14000 families of standards.

Although, it needs to be mentioned that, ISO 26000 is not a management system standard, as are ISO 9001 and ISO 14001; therefore, it does not follow the principles of quality management system (Plan, Do, Check, Act).

ISO 26000 is not designed for certification requirements as ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 are; therefore, it does not contain a set of normative obligations for certification.

Link with other social responsibility standards

AA1000: are principles-based standards for helping organizations become more accountable, responsible and sustainable. They could be used by any type of organization from multinational businesses, to SMEs, governments and civil society organizations. These standards are developed through multi-stakeholder consultations, which ensure that they are written for those they impact, not just those who may gain from them.

SA 8000: is an international standard that encourages organizations to develop, maintain and apply socially acceptable practices in the workplace. It was created in 1989 by SAI (Social Accountability International), an affiliate of the Council on Economic Priorities, and can be applied to any company, of any size.

Social Responsibility - The Business Benefits

In the 21st century, an organization's performance in relation to the society in which it operates and to its impact on the environment has become a critical part of measuring its overall performance. This standard was developed due to a reflection of the increasing global recognition of the need to ensure social equity, govern the impact of the environment and improve organizational governance.

Improved organizational governance	Increased accountability	Increased ethical behavior	Better understanding of social responsibility
Increased transparency	Fair operating practices	Increased reputation and brand	Confidence of clients
Competitive advantage	Legal compliance	Regulatory compliance	Contract compliance

The adoption of an ISO 26000 standard within an organization will include the following benefits:

1. Improved, more accountable and transparent organizational governance;
2. Competitive advantage by positioning itself as a socially responsible organization;
3. Improved services through fair operating practices and managing of consumer issues;
4. Effective and efficient environmental management and management commitment;
5. Increased social responsible actions through ethical behavior;
6. Increased organization reputation in the community and beyond;
7. Increased opportunities to access new markets;
8. Compliance to national, regional and international laws and regulations;
9. Better understanding of the issues related to social responsibility affecting the organization internally and externally;
10. Reduced risk level of losing investors and customers by increasing their confidence in organizational performance;
11. Established trustful relationships through compliance in contractual relations; and
12. Usage of the ISO 26000 as a marketing tool.

Certification of organizations

The usual path that should be followed for an organization that wishes to be certified against ISO 26000 is the following:

1. Implementation of the ISO 26000 standard: Before being audited, the ISO 26000 standard must be in operation for some time. Usually, the minimum time required by the certification bodies is 3 months.

2. Internal audit and review by top management: Before an organization can be certified, it must have had at least one internal audit report and one management review.

3. Selection of the certification body (registrar): Each organization can select the certification body (registrar) of its choice.

4. Pre-assessment audit (optional): An organization can choose to perform a pre-audit to identify any possible gap between its current organizational performance and the requirements of the standard.

5. Stage 1 audit: A conformity review of the ISO 26000 standard implementation. The main objective is to verify that the standard is implemented and meets the requirements of the standard(s) and the

objectives of the organization. It is recommended that at least some portion of the Stage 1 audit should be performed on-site at the organization's premises.

6. **Stage 2 audit (On-site visit):** The Stage 2 audit objective is to evaluate whether the declared implementation of the standard conforms to all requirements of the standard and can support the organization in achieving its objectives. Stage 2 takes place at the site(s) of the organization's sites(s) where the standard is implemented.

7. **Follow-up audit (optional):** If the auditee has non-conformities that require additional audit before being certified, the auditor will perform a follow-up visit to validate only the action plans linked to the non-conformities (usually one day).

8. **Confirmation of registration:** If the organization is compliant with the guidelines of the standard, the Registrar confirms the registration and publishes the certificate.

9. **Continual improvement and surveillance audits:** Once an organization is registered, surveillance activities are conducted by the Certification Body to ensure that the organization still complies with the standard. The surveillance activities must include on-site visits (at least 1/year) that allows the verification to the conformity of the certified client's organizational performance, and can also include: investigations following a complaint, website review, a written request for follow-up, etc.

Training and certifications of professionals

Training title	Short description	Who should attend
ISO 26000 Introduction	•One day training •Introduction to concept management and implementation of a ISO 26000 standard •Do not lead to certification	• Members of a social responsibility team • Project managers or consultants wanting to prepare and to support an organization in the implementation of a social responsibility program • Persons responsible for a social responsibility program or conformity in an organization • Members of a social responsibility team • Auditors
ISO 26000 Foundation	•A two days training •Become familiar with best practices for implementation and management of ISO 26000 standard •One hour exam	• Members of a social responsibility team • Project managers or consultants wanting to prepare and to support an organization in the implementation of a social responsibility program • Persons responsible for a social responsibility program or conformity in an organization • Members of a social responsibility team •Auditors
ISO 26000 Lead Implementer	•A five days training •Manage the implementation and a management of an ISO 26000 standard •Three hours exam	• Project managers or consultants wanting to prepare and to support an organization in the implementation of a social responsibility guidance • ISO 26000 auditor who wish to fully understand the implementation of a social responsibility program • Persons responsible for a social responsibility program conformity in an organization • Members of a social responsibility team • Expert advisors in social responsibility • Experts wanting to prepare for a social responsibility function or project management function
ISO 26000 Lead Auditor	•A five days training •Manage the audit of an ISO 26000 standard •Three hours exam	4. Apply for the certification scheme upon successful completion

Choosing the right certification:

The ISO 26000 Foundation certification is a professional certification for professionals needing to have an overall understanding of the ISO 26000 standard.

The ISO 26000 Implementer certifications are professional certifications for specialists needing to implement the ISO 26000 standard, and in case of the ISO 26000 Lead Implementer Certification, needing to manage an implementation project.

The ISO 26000 Auditor certifications are credentials for professionals needing to audit the Social Responsibility Program, in case of the "ISO 26000 Lead Auditor" Certification, needing to manage a team of auditors.

The ISO 26000 Master certification is a professional certification for professionals needing to implement the ISO 26000 and to master the audit techniques and manage (or be part of) audit teams and audit program.

Based on your overall professional experience and your acquired qualifications, you will get granted one or more of these certifications based on projects or audits activities you have been performing by the past or which you are currently working on.

Certification	Exam	Professional experience	Audit experience	Project experience
Foundation	Foundation Exam	None	None	None
Provisional Implementer	Lead Implementer Exam	None	None	None
Implementer	Lead Implementer Exam	Two years. One year of work experience in the field of certification	None	Project activities totaling 200 hours
Lead Implementer	Lead Implementer Exam	Five years. Two years of work experience in the field of certification	None	Project activities totaling 300 hours
Provisional Auditor	Lead Auditor Exam	None	None	None
Auditor	Lead Auditor Exam	Two years. One year of work experience in the field of certification	Audit activities totaling 200 hours	None
Lead Auditor	Lead Auditor Exam	Five years. Two years of work experience in the field of certification	Audit activities totaling 300 hours	None
Master	Lead Auditor Exam Lead Implementer Exam	Ten years. Two years of work experience in the field of certification	Audit activities totaling 500 hours	Project activities totaling 500 hours

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