



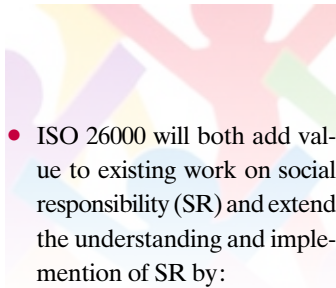
ISO 26000 – Social responsibility

Executive briefing on ISO 26000

by **Roger Frost** *The future International Standard ISO 26000, Guidance on social responsibility, will provide 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 encourage the implementation of best practice in social responsibility worldwide.*



SPECIAL REPORT



• ISO 26000 will both add value to existing work on social responsibility (SR) and extend the understanding and implementation 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, now under development, 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 will not be for use as a certification standard like ISO 9001:2008 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. 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 162 countries).

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.

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 relating to social responsibility
- The background, trends and characteristics of social responsibility
- Principles and practices relating to social responsibility
- Core subjects and issues relating to social responsibility
- Integrating, implementing and promoting socially responsible behaviour throughout the organization and
- Its sphere of influence
- Identifying and engaging with stakeholders
- Communicating commitments and performance related to social responsibility.

What does ISO 26000 contain ?

The detailed content of ISO 26000 is evolving throughout its development process. The current draft document covers the following :

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 – Voluntary initiatives and tools for social responsibility
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The guidance in ISO 26000 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.

Who is developing ISO 26000?

Ninety-one countries and 42 organizations (see below for detailed list) with liaison status are participating in the ISO/WG SR under the

joint leadership of the ISO members for Brazil (ABNT) and Sweden (SIS). Six main stakeholder groups are represented: industry; government; labour; consumers; non-governmental organizations; service, support, research and others, as well as a geographical and gender-based balance of participants.

When will ISO 26000 be ready?

When this issue of *ISO Management Systems* was going to press, ISO 26000 was expected to move from the status of a Committee Draft to that of Draft International Standard (DIS) in September 2009. Publication as an ISO International Standard is targeted for late 2010.



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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.

Record stakeholder participation

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

It is 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 is limited to a maximum of six experts per NSB and two experts per liaison organization.

In July 2009, the ISO/WG SR had 430 participating experts and 175 observers from 91 ISO member countries and 42 liaison organizations.

• Participating countries

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

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



• Liaison organizations

The following organizations are liaison members of the ISO/WG SR and have 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)



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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)

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

CI (Consumers International)

EBEN (European Business Ethics Network)

EC (European Commission)

ECOLOGIA (Ecologists Linked for Organizing Grass-roots Initiatives and Action)

EFQM www.efqm.org

EIRIS Foundation & Ethical Investment Research Services (EIRIS) 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 (Institut 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)

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• ISO internal liaisons

The following ISO standards-developing technical committees (TCS) have 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*.

• Observer countries

The ISO members of the following countries (the acronyms of the NSBs appear in brackets) are observers to the ISO/WG SR:

Bolivia (IBNORCA)

Cameroun (CDNQ)

Estonia (ESV)

Guatemala (COGUANDOR)

Hong Kong, China (ITCHK SAR)

Latvia (LVS)

Lithuania (LST)

Malawi (MDS)

Mongolia (MASM)

New Zealand (SNZ)

Palestine (PSI)

Senegal (ASN).

Where can I find more information?

For more information on ISO 26000 and the ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility, see the dedicated Web site: 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. A number are available in several languages.

Working documents including the latest available draft of the standard can be accessed at: www.iso.org/wgsr.

