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ISO Guide 82:2014

Guidelines for addressing sustainability in standards

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Executive Summary

- Sustainability is the goal of sustainable development.
- It refers to any state of the global system in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- The concept of sustainability is continually evolving.
- Standards writers are encouraged to consider sustainability issues in their work at all stages in the standards development process.
- This Guide provides guidance to standards writers on how to take account of sustainability in the drafting, revision and updating of ISO standards and similar deliverables.
- It aims to raise awareness of sustainability issues arising from the application of ISO standards.

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Contents

	Page
Foreword	5
Introduction	6
1 Scope	7
2 Normative references	7
3 Terms and definitions	7
4 What is sustainability?	7
5 Addressing sustainability in standards	9
6 Planning the strategy	9
6.1 Issues to think about before establishing a committee	9
6.2 Issues to think about when a committee has been established: the strategic business plan	11
7 Planning the content	12
7.1 Responsibilities	12
7.2 Understanding approaches to sustainability	12
7.3 Identifying principles related to sustainability	14
7.4 Identifying sustainability issues	14
8 Addressing sustainability issues	16
8.1 General	16
8.2 Addressing sustainability in certain types of standards	16
8.3 Solutions to address conflicting multiple sustainability issues	17
9 Review and revision of standards	18
Annex A (informative) Example of a list of structured sustainability issues	19
Annex B (informative) Examples of guidance and questions on sustainable development	21
Annex C (informative) Examples of how to develop provisions on environmental aspects	22
Bibliography	24

Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may

be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [Foreword - Supplementary information](#)

ISO Guide 82 was prepared by the ISO Technical Management Board Sustainability Guide Drafting Group.

This corrected version of ISO Guide 82:2014 incorporates the correction of cross-references in [Clause 5](#) and of the URL in [Annex B](#).

Introduction

Sustainability is the goal of sustainable development. It refers to any state of the global system in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainability is continually evolving. Understanding and achieving a balance between environmental, social and economic systems, ideally in mutually supporting ways, is considered essential for making progress towards achieving sustainability. The achievement of sustainability is now recognized as one of the most important considerations in all human activities.

The term “sustainable development” is often used to describe development that leads to sustainability, and the term “social responsibility” is often used to describe how an individual organization (e.g. a company) can contribute to sustainable development.

ISO standards can contribute to the achievement of sustainability, either directly (where they specifically address sustainability issues) or indirectly (e.g. where they relate to testing, products, procedures, services, terminology, management systems or auditing). However, since sustainable developments and progress towards sustainability are heavily dependent on a multitude of variables, including social, environmental, economic, geographic and technical conditions, it is important that standards writers do not reach overall conclusions that particular activities (including processes) or products (including services) are “sustainable.”

NOTE In this Guide, the term “activities and products” includes “processes and services”.

This Guide is intended for use by anyone involved in the development of ISO standards and similar deliverables, and aims to:

a) raise awareness of sustainability issues arising from the application of ISO standards;

- b) provide standards writers with a systematic approach to addressing sustainability issues in a coherent and consistent manner, with regard to both new and revised standards, and in a manner related to the objective and scope of the standard being developed;
- c) promote consistency, where appropriate, among standards that address sustainability.

This Guide makes reference to related ISO deliverables, as appropriate, e.g. ISO Guide 64 (which addresses environmental issues in product standards) and ISO 26000 (which provides guidance on social responsibility).

Standards writers are encouraged to consider sustainability issues in their work at all stages in the standards development process. If sustainability issues have not been considered, this can be a valid reason to start the revision of a standard. In addition, the significance or relevance of specific issues might have changed since the previous edition of a standard was drafted or reviewed. Whenever a new standard is drafted or an existing standard is revised, all standards writers (including project leaders, convenors, committee chairs and secretaries) are encouraged to actively promote the application of this Guide, and thereby involve experts knowledgeable in the subject.

1 Scope

This Guide provides guidance to standards writers on how to take account of sustainability in the drafting, revision and updating of ISO standards and similar deliverables.

It outlines a methodology that ISO standards writers can use to develop their own approach to addressing sustainability on a subject-specific basis.

2 Normative references

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normatively referenced in this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO/IEC Guide 2, *Standardization and related activities — General vocabulary*

ISO 14050, *Environmental management Vocabulary*

3.2

sustainable development

development that meets the environmental, social and economic needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note 1 to entry: Derived from the Brundtland Report^[17].

3.3

stakeholder

individual or group that has an interest in any decision or activity of an organization

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, definition 2.20]

3.4

social responsibility

responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour that:

- contributes to *sustainable development* (3.2), including the health and the welfare of society;
- takes into account the expectations of *stakeholders* (3.3);

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 2, ISO 14050 and the following apply.

3.1

sustainability

state of the global system, including environmental, social and economic aspects, in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note 1 to entry: The environmental, social and economic aspects interact, are interdependent and are often referred to as the three dimensions of sustainability.

Note 2 to entry: Sustainability is the goal of *sustainable development* (3.2).

- is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behaviour; and
- is integrated throughout the organization and practised in its relationships

Note 1 to entry: Activities include products, services and processes.

Note 2 to entry: Relationships refer to an organization's activities within its sphere of influence.

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, definition 2.18]

3.5

standards writer

individual or group taking part in the development of a standard

4 What is sustainability?

Sustainability is the goal of sustainable development, a widely applied concept that gained international recognition following the publication in 1987 of the *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future* (commonly referred to as the *Brundtland Report*)^[17]. Since then, the importance of sustainability and sustainable development has been reiterated in numerous international forums, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 (the “Rio Declaration”), the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 (“Rio+20”).

Sustainability encompasses three dimensions (economic, environmental and social) which are interdependent and can be mutually reinforcing. The environment sets natural limits to the social system, which is made up of human institutions and individuals. The economy, as one part of the social system, includes the consumption of resources, employment, meeting the needs of populations (which are typically growing), income, and the distribution and use of products. Sustainability has been misunderstood by some as being primarily an environmental concept, including issues such as climate change, non-sustainable resource use or depletion, and loss of fertile soil and biodiversity. However, sustainability also includes social and economic issues, such as social structures, standards of living, income distribution, production, distribution and use of resources, products and services, and employment. Sustainability relates to the interaction with, and relationship between, these issues.

Sustainability is relevant to all levels of human activity, from the global level to the national, regional and community levels, as well as to the behaviour of individuals. It is also affected by all kinds of organizations, including governments, non-governmental organizations, companies, co-operatives, federations and unions. Sustainability is much more likely to be achieved by society as a whole

if social, economic and environmental aspects are addressed in an integrated manner.

NOTE [Annex C](#) provides examples of how to develop provisions on environmental aspects.

As defined in [3.1](#), sustainability refers to a state of the global system, encompassing the environmental, social and economic subsystems, in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Given the intergenerational nature of sustainability (i.e. the needs of future generations cannot be fully defined by the present generation) and the constant changes in the environmental, societal (e.g. population growth) and economic subsystems, sustainability cannot be described purely in terms of a single fixed end point. From this perspective, sustainability is a characteristic of the planet as a whole, and not of any particular activity or organization. However, sustainable development addresses the activities and products of particular organizations (or communities, nations, etc.) and the ability to engage in such development in a manner that contributes to sustainability. Such development is needed to meet the needs of both present and future generations, and is therefore essential to sustainability.

In this context, sustainability and sustainable development issues can be viewed as concerns about changes (adverse or beneficial) to the environmental, societal or economic subsystems as a result of development, which can affect the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability issues can arise from a wide range of activities and products that interact with, or can have an impact on, society, the economy or the environment.

The terms “sustainability”, “sustainable development” and “social responsibility” are used interchangeably by some stakeholders, but even though there is a close relationship between them, they are three different concepts and are therefore not interchangeable. Since sustainable development relates to the economic, social and environmental goals

common to all people, it can be used to refer to the broader expectations of society.

Social responsibility encompasses an organization's responsibility for the impact of its decisions and activities on society, the environment and economy, and therefore the organization's contribution to sustainable development and sustainability. Although the term "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) might be a more familiar term than "social responsibility", the view has recently emerged that "social responsibility" is applicable to all organizations, as different types of entities or groups of people and facilities, both inside and outside the business world, recognize that they also have a responsibility to contribute to current sustainable development and future sustainability.

The standards development process provides standards writers with the opportunity to contribute to sustainable development, and in particular to encourage sustainable production and consumption.

5 Addressing sustainability in standards

There are parallels between addressing sustainability in standards and addressing the sustainability issues of an organization, even though there are some unique challenges in standards due to the nature of standards writing (e.g. it is largely done by volunteers from a variety of organizations who meet only occasionally, and often disband after a particular project is completed). Once the relevant principles of the work have been discussed, the main task is to identify sustainability issues that are relevant and significant (see 7.4.2 and 7.4.3) and to address them by integrating specific provisions into standards.

Existing information related to sustainable development, including information that has already been the subject of standardization, can be used to identify and evaluate relevant issues (see Annex B).

EXAMPLE ISO/TC 59/SC 17 has provided guidance on sustainability issues related to buildings and civil engineering works.

However, it might sometimes be necessary to involve experts who are knowledgeable on the subjects related to sustainability, e.g. in complex fields such as human rights, the environment or economics. It can also be useful to include other relevant, current sector-specific guidance on environmental, social or economic provisions identified in related ISO standards.

This clause (Clause 5) discusses how sustainable development can be addressed at the planning stages of standards work. Clauses 6 and 7 provide specific guidance on identifying sustainable development issues (including principles and approaches). Clause 8 discusses how those issues can be addressed in the standards writing or revision process.

Figure 1 illustrates a process for identifying and addressing sustainability issues.

NOTE 1 The linear depiction in Figure 1 might not be the only valid approach.

NOTE 2 The numbering in Figure 1 refers to the clauses and subclauses in this Guide.

6 Planning the strategy

6.1 Issues to think about before establishing a committee

NOTE In this Guide, unless otherwise stated, the term "committee" includes technical committees (TC), project committees (PC) and subcommittees (SC).

Sustainable development should be taken into account during the formation of committees and in subsequent phases of the writing process of ISO standards.

This enables sustainable development to be integrated into the scope, structure and work plan of a TC from the start, as well as promoting awareness of sustainable development amongst the TC's leadership and

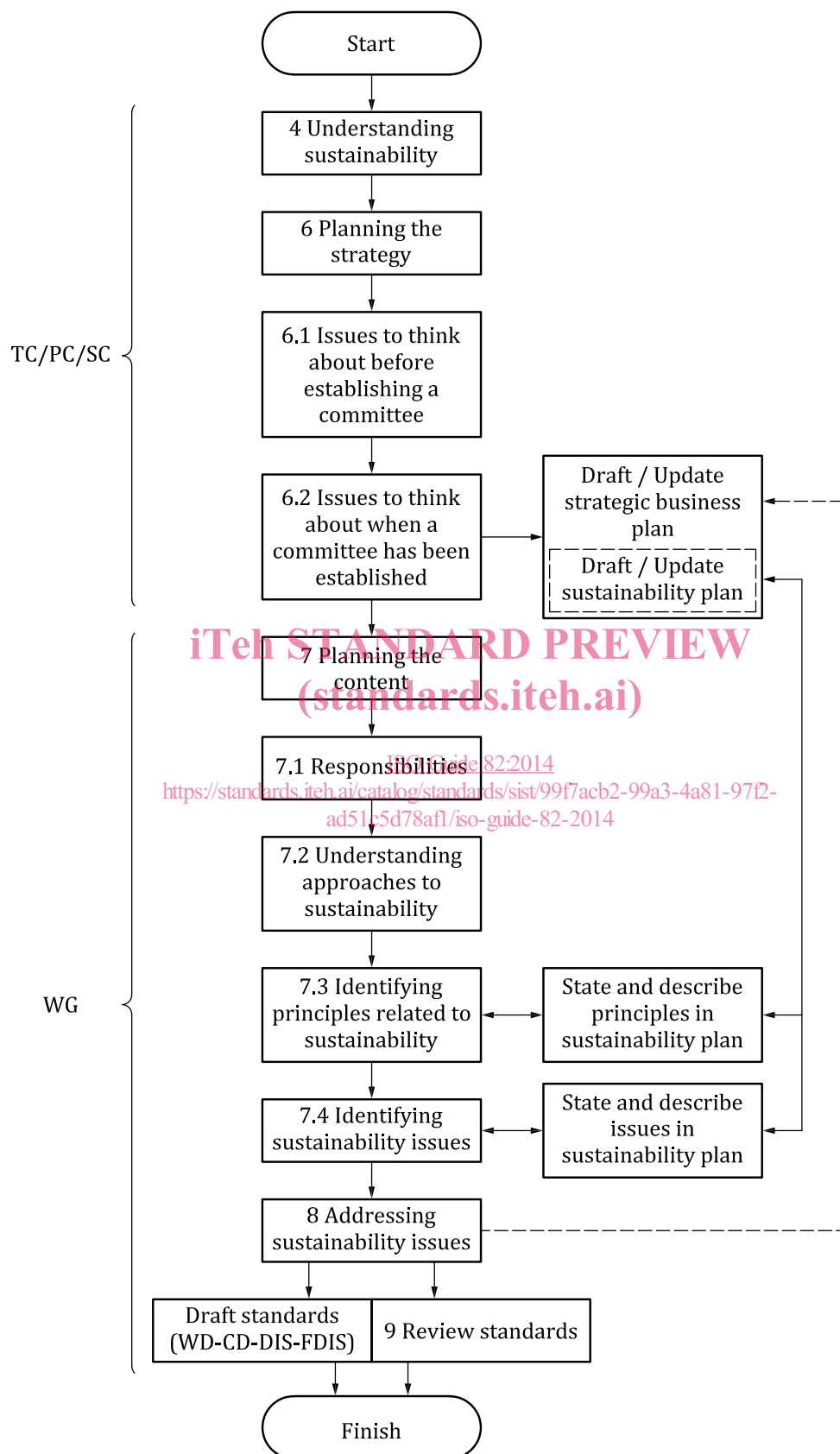


Figure 1 — ISO Guide 82 process flow

participants, and clarifying that sustainable development will be an integral part of the TC's work. The considerations that should be taken into account at this stage include the following.

- a) Scope: Has sustainable development been taken into account in a manner appropriate to the subject matter of the TC?
- b) Structure: How will sustainable development be addressed through the structure of the TC? The options include:
 - including sustainable development as a discrete issue to be dealt with by a subcommittee;
 - creating a task force on sustainable development;
 - integrating sustainable development into the efforts of each SC or working group (WG);
 - a combination of these options.
- c) Participation: Does the TC have the appropriate participation (consistent with and taking into account the ISO/IEC Directives and guidance on participation), in terms of both diversity of stakeholders and expertise, to effectively address sustainable development issues? What measures might be taken to address any shortcomings?

When a TC is created, the documentation should include a description of how each of these questions has been addressed. It is recommended that existing TCs also go through this process and update their scope, structure and participation processes accordingly. These same concepts can be applied to the formation of SCs within TCs.

6.2 Issues to think about when a committee has been established: the strategic business plan

ISO requires each TC to prepare a strategic business plan for its field of activity within 18 months of its creation. The strategic

business plan is reviewed by the ISO Technical Management Board (TMB).

NOTE PCs and SCs are not required to prepare a strategic business plan.

As outlined in this Guide, it is recommended that each strategic business plan should include a sustainability plan that describes how the TC intends to address sustainable development in its work. TCs currently in existence should update their strategic business plans to include sustainable development.

This sustainable development component of the strategic business plan should be appropriate to the TC's field of work, given that sustainable development issues can be more directly implicated in some areas of standardization than in others. The sustainability plan should include:

- defined processes describing how sustainable development will be taken into account in the selection of new work items, including the setting of the scope of such work items;
- programmes for ensuring that TC participants are aware of sustainable development and how it applies to standards writing, including the guidance provided in this Guide;
- a description of how the work of the TC will be reviewed with respect to the identification of relevant general sustainable development principles and approaches, and how particular sustainability issues might emerge in the context of the standard being developed.

The strategic business plan should identify relevant sustainable development issues that can be applicable to all or most of the TC's work. The strategic business plan should be updated regularly. Alternatively, relevant sustainable development issues could be identified at SC or WG level, or on a document-by-document basis, or by a combination of these approaches, as appropriate (e.g. a TC-wide evaluation of sustainability issues could be fine-tuned at both SC and WG levels).