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## Environmental management — Vocabulary

*Management environnemental — Vocabulaire*

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## 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](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 207, *Environmental management*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee CEN/SS S26, *Environmental management*, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

This fourth edition cancels and replaces the third edition (ISO 14050:2009), which has been technically revised. The fourth edition is structured differently from the third edition. It presents a more generic vocabulary of environmental management terminology.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

## Introduction

Communication is important in the implementation and operation of environmental management systems. This communication will be most effective if there is a common understanding of the terms used.

To simplify the harmonization of terms and definitions in the field of environmental management, each terminological entry in this document contains a generic term and its definition. Notes to entry and examples have been included only in a few cases to provide additional information or clarification.

The terminology is arranged in subclauses, each representing a specific sub-domain. The sequence of the term entries corresponds to the concept diagrams in [Annex A](#).

This document has been developed in close cooperation with the committees and working groups involved in the development and revision of the ISO 14000 family of standards. A list of published documents in the ISO 14000 family of standards is presented in the Bibliography.

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# Environmental management — Vocabulary

## 1 Scope

This document defines terms used in documents in the field of environmental management systems and tools in support of sustainable development. These include management systems, auditing and other types of assessment, communications, footprinting studies, greenhouse gas mitigation and adaptation to climate change.

## 2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

## 3 Terms and definitions

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

### 3.1 General terms relating to management systems

#### 3.1.1

##### **organization**

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its *objectives* (3.1.6)

#### 3.1.2

##### **interested party**

stakeholder

person or *organization* (3.1.1) that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or activity

#### 3.1.3

##### **top management**

person or group of people who directs and controls an *organization* (3.1.1) at the highest level

#### 3.1.4

##### **management system**

set of interrelated or interacting elements of an *organization* (3.1.1) to establish *policies* (3.1.5) and *objectives* (3.1.6), as well as *processes* (3.1.9) to achieve those objectives

#### 3.1.5

##### **policy**

intentions and direction of an *organization* (3.1.1), as formally expressed by its *top management* (3.1.3)

#### 3.1.6

##### **objective**

result to be achieved

#### 3.1.7

##### **risk**

effect of uncertainty

**3.1.8**

**hazard**

potential source of injury or damage to the health of people, or damage to property or the *environment* ([3.2.2](#))

**3.1.9**

**process**

set of interrelated or interacting activities that uses or transforms inputs to deliver a result

**3.1.10**

**competence**

ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended results

**3.1.11**

**documented information**

information required to be controlled and maintained by an *organization* ([3.1.1](#)) and the medium on which it is contained

**3.1.12**

**performance**

measurable result

**3.1.13**

**continual improvement**

recurring activity to enhance *performance* ([3.1.12](#))

**3.1.14**

**effectiveness**

extent to which planned activities are realized and planned results achieved

**3.1.15**

**requirement**

need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory

**3.1.16**

**conformity**

fulfilment of a *requirement* ([3.1.15](#))

**3.1.17**

**nonconformity**

non-fulfilment of a *requirement* ([3.1.15](#))

**3.1.18**

**corrective action**

action to eliminate the cause(s) of a *nonconformity* ([3.1.17](#)) and to prevent recurrence

**3.1.19**

**audit**

systematic and independent *process* ([3.1.9](#)) for obtaining evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the *audit criteria* ([3.4.44](#)) are fulfilled

**3.1.20**

**measurement**

*process* ([3.1.9](#)) to determine a value

**3.1.21**

**monitoring**

determining the status of a system, a *process* ([3.1.9](#)) or an activity



## 3.2 General terms relating to environmental management

### 3.2.1

#### **environmental management**

set of coordinated activities within an *organization* (3.1.1) related to its *environmental aspects* (3.2.20)

### 3.2.2

#### **environment**

surroundings in which an *organization* (3.1.1) operates, including air, water, *land* (3.8.16), *natural resources* (3.2.5), flora, fauna, humans and their interrelationships

### 3.2.3

#### **ecosystem**

dynamic complex of communities of plants, animals and microorganisms and their non-living environment, interacting as a functional entity

### 3.2.4

#### **ecosystem service**

benefit people obtain from one or several *ecosystems* (3.2.3)

### 3.2.5

#### **natural resource**

part of nature that provides benefits to humans or underpins human well-being

### 3.2.6

#### **environmental baseline**

state of the *environment* (3.2.2) without the change that is considered

### 3.2.7

#### **target group**

*interested party* (3.1.2) or interested parties selected as the focus of an *organization's* (3.1.1) *environmental communication* (3.7.19) activity

### 3.2.8

#### **third party**

person or body that is recognized as being independent of the parties involved, as concerns the issues in question

### 3.2.9

#### **sustainable development**

development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

### 3.2.10

#### **prevention of pollution**

use of *processes* (3.1.9), practices, techniques, materials, *products* (3.5.12), or energy to avoid, reduce or control (separately or in combination) the creation, emission or discharge of any type of pollutant or waste, in order to reduce adverse *environmental impacts* (3.2.22)

### 3.2.11

#### **area of concern**

aspect of the natural *environment* (3.2.2), human health or resources of interest to society

### 3.2.12

#### **environmental topic area**

area of interest or concern for *environmental management* (3.2.1) in an *organization* (3.1.1) in relation to its surroundings

### 3.2.13

#### **methodology**

set of means or *procedures* (3.3.6) used for a specific purpose

**3.2.14**

**transparency**

open, comprehensive and understandable presentation of information

**3.2.15**

**benchmark**

reference point against which comparisons can be made

**3.2.16**

**equity share**

extent of the rights an *organization* (3.1.1) has to the *risks* (3.1.7) and rewards from an operation based on its equity interest

**3.2.17**

**local authority**

public body given the authority by legislation or directives of a higher level of government to set general *policies* (3.1.5), plans or *requirements* (3.1.15)

**3.2.18**

**site**

location with geographical boundaries and on which activities under the control of an *organization* (3.1.1) can be carried out

**3.2.19**

**facility**

single installation, set of installations or production *processes* (3.1.9) (stationary or mobile), which can be defined within a single geographical boundary, organizational unit or production process

**3.2.20**

**environmental aspect**

element of an *organization's* (3.1.1) activities or *products* (3.5.12) that interacts or can interact with the *environment* (3.2.2)

**3.2.21**

**environmental impact pathway**

series of consecutive, causal relationships, ultimately starting at an *environmental aspect* (3.2.20) and ending at an *environmental impact* (3.2.22)

**3.2.22**

**environmental impact**

change to the *environment* (3.2.2), whether adverse or beneficial, including possible consequences, wholly or partially resulting from an *organization's* (3.1.1) *environmental aspects* (3.2.20)

**3.2.23**

**environmental impact factor**

quantity of *environmental impact* (3.2.22) per quantity of *environmental aspect* (3.2.20)

**3.2.24**

**indicator**

quantitative, qualitative or binary variable that can be measured, calculated or described, representing the status of operations, management, conditions or impacts

**3.2.25**

**key performance indicator**

**KPI**

*indicator* (3.2.24) of *performance* (3.1.12) deemed by an *organization* (3.1.1) to be significant and giving prominence and attention to certain aspects of operations, management, conditions or impacts

**3.2.26****combined indicator**

*indicator* (3.2.24) that includes information on more than one aspect of operations, management, conditions or impacts

**3.2.27****environmental performance**

*performance* (3.1.12) related to the management of *environmental aspects* (3.2.20)

**3.2.28****environmental performance evaluation****EPE**

*process* (3.1.9) to facilitate management decisions regarding an *organization's* (3.1.1) *environmental performance* (3.2.27) by selecting *indicators* (3.2.24), collecting and analysing data, assessing information against environmental performance criteria, reporting and communicating, and periodically reviewing and improving this process

**3.2.29****environmental performance indicator****EPI**

*indicator* (3.2.24) that provides information about an *organization's* (3.1.1) *environmental performance* (3.2.27)

**3.2.30****management performance indicator****MPI**

*environmental performance indicator* (3.2.29) that provides information about the management efforts to influence an *organization's* (3.1.1) *environmental performance* (3.2.27)

**3.2.31****operational performance indicator****OPI**

*environmental performance indicator* (3.2.29) that provides information about the *environmental performance* (3.2.27) of an *organization's* (3.1.1) operation

**3.2.32****environmental condition indicator**

*indicator* (3.2.24) that provides information about the local, regional, national or global *environmental condition* (3.2.33)

**3.2.33****environmental condition**

state or characteristic of the *environment* (3.2.2) as determined at a certain point in time

**3.2.34****sphere of influence**

range or extent of political, contractual, economic or other relationships through which an *organization* (3.1.1) has the ability to affect the decisions or activities of individuals or organizations

**3.2.35****trade-off**

decision-making actions that select from various *requirements* (3.1.15) and alternative solutions on the basis of net benefit to *interested parties* (3.1.2)

### 3.3 Terms relating to environmental management systems

#### 3.3.1

##### **environmental management system**

##### **EMS**

part of the *management system* (3.1.4) used to manage *environmental aspects* (3.2.20), fulfil *compliance obligations* (3.3.4), and address *risks* (3.1.7) and opportunities

#### 3.3.2

##### **environmental policy**

*policy* (3.1.5) related to *environmental performance* (3.2.27)

#### 3.3.3

##### **environmental objective**

*objective* (3.1.6) set by the *organization* (3.1.1) and consistent with its *environmental policy* (3.3.2)

#### 3.3.4

##### **compliance obligation**

legal requirement that an *organization* (3.1.1) has to comply with or other *requirement* (3.1.15) that an organization has to or chooses to comply with

#### 3.3.5

##### **maturity level**

level of achievement in the implementation process measured on a scale of maturity for *environmental management system* (3.3.1) elements

#### 3.3.6

##### **procedure**

specified way to carry out an activity or a *process* (3.1.9)

### 3.4 Terms relating to verification, validation and audit

#### 3.4.1

##### **verification**

conformity assessment

confirmation through the provision of *objective evidence* (3.4.32), that specified *requirements* (3.1.15) have been fulfilled

#### 3.4.2

##### **verification statement**

formal declaration of the outcome of a *verification* (3.4.1)

#### 3.4.3

##### **verification team**

one or more *verifiers* (3.4.5) conducting a *verification* (3.4.1), supported if needed by *technical experts* (3.4.36)

#### 3.4.4

##### **verification body**

*organization* (3.1.1) that performs *verifications* (3.4.1)

#### 3.4.5

##### **verifier**

competent and independent person or persons with responsibility for performing and reporting on a *verification* (3.4.1) *process* (3.1.9)

#### 3.4.6

##### **verification plan**

planning document detailing the implementation of *verification* (3.4.1)

**3.4.7****verification report**

document detailing a *verification* (3.4.1) and its results

**3.4.8****environmental claim verification**

confirmation of the validity of an *environmental claim* (3.7.3) using specific predetermined criteria and *procedures* (3.3.6) with an assurance of data reliability

**3.4.9****technology**

application of scientific knowledge, tools, techniques, crafts or systems in order to solve a problem or to achieve an *objective* (3.1.6), which can result in a *product* (3.5.12) or *process* (3.1.9)

**3.4.10****environmental technology**

*technology* (3.4.9) that either results in an *environmental added value* (3.4.12) or measures parameters that indicate an *environmental impact* (3.2.22)

**3.4.11****environmental technology verification**

*verification* (3.4.1) of the *performance* (3.1.12) of an *environmental technology* (3.4.10) by a *verifier* (3.4.5)

**3.4.12****environmental added value**

more beneficial or less adverse *environmental impact* (3.2.22) of a *technology* (3.4.9) with respect to the relevant alternative

**3.4.13****intrusive investigation**

sampling and testing requiring physical interference

**3.4.14****professional scepticism**

attitude that includes a questioning mind and a critical assessment of evidence

**3.4.15****completeness check**

*process* (3.1.9) of verifying whether information from the phases of a *life cycle assessment* (3.6.2) is sufficient for reaching conclusions in accordance with the goal and scope definition

**3.4.16****consistency check**

*process* (3.1.9) of verifying that the assumptions, methods and data are consistently applied throughout the study and are in accordance with the goal and scope definition performed before conclusions are reached

**3.4.17****sensitivity check**

*process* (3.1.9) to determine that the information obtained from a *sensitivity analysis* (3.6.25) is relevant for reaching conclusions, changing results, have influence on results and giving recommendations

**3.4.18****test body**

*organization* (3.1.1) providing an environment for testing, test implementation and means for performing and reporting on the testing

**3.4.19****test plan**

planning document detailing the principles, test methods, conditions, *procedures* (3.3.6) and *data quality* (3.6.46) required to carry out testing and to produce test data