



Die
Bundesregierung



Position
on
non-certification status of standard ISO 26000
“Guidance on social responsibility”

*BDA, BDI, DIHK, ZDH and relevant German government departments
BMAS (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs), AA (Federal Foreign Office), BMJ
(Federal Ministry of Justice), BMF (Federal Ministry of Finance) BMWi (Federal Ministry of
Economics and Technology), BMELV (Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer
Protection), BMFSFJ (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and
Youth), BMU (Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear
Safety) BMZ (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)*

Standard ISO 26000 takes the form of “guidance on social responsibility” which is intended to facilitate, in the widest sense, strategic planning and implementation of social responsibility in companies and other organisations (CSR).

All initiators and participants working on the standard are and always have been in agreement that this broad approach is incompatible with certification status. For that reason, the standard explicitly states that ISO 26000 is not a management system standard (e.g. along the lines of ISO 9001 or ISO 14001), and is not designed, and is also not suitable, either for certification purposes or for statutory and/or contractual applications. Any offers concerning certification or claims to be certified in accordance with ISO 26000 run counter to the scope and the purpose of this international standard. Measured against the aspiration to behave in a socially responsible way, such efforts would therefore be more likely to damage an organisation’s image than to enhance it.

Rather, it is the objective of ISO 26000 to provide organisations which want to engage seriously in the international debate on CSR principles, practices, core issues and fields for action with orientations and pointers, and to enable them to align their organisations comprehensively and continuously on this guidance.

Alongside management and steering mechanisms, central elements for realisation of CSR goals in the spirit of ISO 26000 are the organisation’s and its members’ values, thought patterns, behaviours and practices. In the eyes of the international experts who have developed the standard, certification (e.g. along the lines of ISO 9001) would fail to do justice to the breadth of issues and complexity inherent in CSR. In addition, certification calls for

criteria which can be verified in concrete terms. ISO 26000 lacks and specifically does not seek to identify such criteria. Instead, it establishes that the various fields for action have a different relevance for organisations depending on their nature and size.

This means that certification in accordance with ISO 26000 would also give certifying bodies far too much definition and interpretation leeway. Accordingly, certification in accordance with ISO 26000 cannot be justified in terms of either form or content.

In concert with parties involved in the standardisation process, the German government will therefore approach the institutions involved in the certification process in Germany and have them inform the public about the misleading nature of the term "certification pursuant to ISO 26000". To this end, they support the use of the following clarification on DIN's website www.sr.din.de:

This International Standard is not a management system standard.

It is not intended or appropriate for certification purposes or regulatory or contractual use. Any offer to certify, or claims to be certified, to ISO 26000 would be a misrepresentation of the intent and purpose and a misuse of this International Standard. As this International Standard does not contain requirements, any such certification would not be a demonstration of conformity with this International Standard.