

ISO 26000 strengths and weaknesses

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(not claiming completeness...)

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What is ISO 26000?

Mainly:

- a widely agreed ISO standard
- the first international “consensus” about what SR is
- a 100 pages document including references and bibliography
- formally published as a “standard”, however
- as regards content, a *guidance* document (offering recommendations and orientation)
- structured into 7 core subjects and 37 issues
- including an annex with a list of existing tools and standards (not an exhaustive list)
- claiming that all core subjects are relevant to all organizations, but not all issues
- claiming to be applicable to all types and sizes of organizations regardless of their location

What ISO 26000 is not?

Mainly:

- neither a *requirements’* standard, nor a management standard, nor a management systems standard (like ISO 9001 or 14001)
- therefore not for audits and certification,
- not for use or reference in any kind of private or public contracts as a requirement, including procurement
- not for assessments (assessments would have to be based on requirements)

The strengths of ISO 26000

Mainly:

- broad international consensus (ISO consensus does not mean unanimity)
- enhancing the international SR debate, building on ISO's reputation
- attempting to address all types and sizes of organizations, not only industry
- freedom of use: offers *guidance* where users may select from the parts judged relevant at a particular point of time
- focusing on 7 core subjects, which may be the most important ones at international level
- offering rather detailed explanations and suggestions for the 37 issues
- good orientation for organizations that start their SR journey
- good basis for company-external discussions like stakeholder dialogues
- good basis for cross-border dialogues

The weaknesses of ISO 26000

Mainly:

- the need to purchase the document (prices vary from €50 to €170, see <http://www.26k->

[estimation.com/html/best_prices_for_iso_26000.html#26kBestPrices](http://www.26k-estimation.com/html/best_prices_for_iso_26000.html#26kBestPrices) ,while other documents like the UNGC , GRI and many others are freely available, see further down here)

- the *explicit* inclusion of micro-organizations (less than 10 persons)
- volume of hundred pages
- several weak definitions (like *organisation, stakeholder, international norms of behaviour*)
- international orientation
- turgid language in many parts
- limiting the consideration of SR to 7 core subjects and 37 issues (isn't SR in real life much more variable?)
- a textbook, with a teaching style in several clauses
- containing a number of sentences without any meaning
- listing recommendations without being able to specify what has already been regulated by national governments
- opening a wide range for misconceptions and misuse like certification (BV, others) or assessment (SGS, others), see http://www.26k-estimation.com/html/misconceptions_and_misuse.html
- sloppy language (like *implementation* of guidance, *guideline* instead of guidance, *managing* social responsibility)
- too much focus on organisation-internal operations instead of the identification of possible contributions to society
- complexity of the document

SR related other global documents, freely available:

UNGC United Nations Global Compact <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/> and its ten principles
<http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/index.html>

GRI Global Reporting Initiative

<https://www.globalreporting.org/reporting/latest-guidelines/g3-1-guidelines/Pages/default.aspx>

OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises,

<http://www.oecd.org/investment/investmentpolicy/48004323.pdf>

ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_101234.pdf

ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_176149.pdf

UN Guiding Principles for Human Rights and Business

http://www.unglobalcompact.org/issues/human_rights/The_UN_SMSG_and_the_UN_Global_Compact.html

An employer's guide to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents_pdf/policy_area/2012-05_Updated_List_of_all_IOE_publications.pdf

Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights - an interpretive guide

http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/human_rights/Resources/CR_Respect_HR_Interpretive_Guide.pdf