Sustenuto

Sustainability Coach

Social responsibility in government organizations through ISO 26000 and GRI

Final report of the pilot project ordered by the Federal Public Planning Services for Sustainable Development

– 2012 –

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Content

Summary

Various authorities are watching globally the ISO 26000 implementation steps. After a long development process with a large number of stakeholders, the moment of "going live" has now arrived. The Belgian federal authorities, via their Public Planning Services (PPS) for Sustainable Development, took the lead to launch a pilot project for governmental organizations. Four public authorities showed their willingness to participate, The Federal Public Services (FPS) Finance, Social Security, Economy and the PPS Sustainable Development itself. The four participating administrations are quite different, already by their respective size. The headcount of the FPS Finance reaches approximately 26.000, the FPS Economy around 13.000, the FPS Social Security counts more or less 1.300 and the PPS Sustainable Development employs 20 persons. Therefore, it is the first global test project of this scale for the application of the ISO 26000 guidelines. Goal of this pilot project was to support and give guidance to the four participating administrations in the implementation of the ISO 26000 directive as well as the release of a report based on the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) directives.

This report consists of four parts :

1. **Frame & design:** *the context, the framework conditions and structures of the project.*
2. **Process & approach:** *approach and work methods with the four administrations.*
3. **Results & solutions:** *what has been achieved and what has been learned.*
4. **Conclusions & recommendations:** *challenges and directions for future applications.*

The pilot project itself consisted of four phases:

1. **determine** *the framework conditions for the work to be done within each administration,*
2. **understand** *and recognize the various key concepts of the ISO 26000 and GRI,*
3. **execute** *actual analyses of the various aspects to define the initial position,*
4. **convert** *the analysis, reflections and data collection into a concrete action plan and GRI report*

A lot was at stake. In total, some eighty meetings were organized for the execution of this pilot project within the various organizations. The concrete results are some 60 proposed action plans. As a preparation, some 200 aspects were considered being relevant, some 170 aspects as significant and some 120 aspects as priorities. One the one hand, for the GRI, this pilot project led to 2 GRI reports at B-level and 2 GRI reports at C-level, at the level of the entire organization and on the other hand, for a specific department. Generally, it can be stated that a clear knowledge increase exists on what sustainability means to an organization, what the various topics understood by sustainability are, what this means with regard to the responsibility for the various administrations, how this can be derived through the application of the ISO guidelines and the kind of actions one can consequently determine and develop within the organization.

This pilot project showed especially where the strengths and the challenges of the ISO 26000 and the GRI are located, and where both directives can be better aligned.

Introduction

Motive

In April 2005, to implement actions 8 and 31 of the second federal plan for sustainable development, a structured process, with involvement of stakeholders, was started and resulted in a Belgian reference framework for corporate social responsibility (CSR). This resulted in the first federal CSR action plan. The execution of this action plan was evaluated in 2009, also with the stakeholders' input. The Interdepartmental Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD), worked out the adjustments and new actions were included (19 March 2010). One of the new action (action 6) concerns the start of a pilot project with the federal authorities regarding the new ISO 26000 directives for social responsibility (SR) and the release of a sustainability report, based on the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).

Context

The inextricable entanglement of sustainable development and the inclusion of the social responsibility is a fact. The tremendous worldwide social, environmental and economical challenges are claiming various system and organizational adjustments. Each organization in the society has to play its role and can contribute. The government plays a special role with a double mission. First to manage policies and execute them in various domains and doing so guarantee its social role towards the citizens and actors. Secondly, the public organization itself who, in order to carry out the policies, develops various (core) activities in line with the goals of the organization and management. With both missions, impacts on the society are generated. Globalization and increased chain complexity have not only an impact on the management development, but contains also challenges for a socially responsible management of each type of organization, including the government organization.

The new voluntary ISO 26000 (published in November 2010) is the first international directive for the inclusion of *social responsibility* (SR) by an organization. It is no longer a (C)SR, in the strict sense and only for companies, but about the notion that each type of organization can assume its 'social responsibility'. The directive is therefore unique because it has been developed worldwide in a never seen before extensive multi-stakeholders consultation process with experts from 99 countries. The Belgian Federal Public Planning Services for Sustainable Development (PPS-SD) has been, in its quality of 'government' stakeholders representative, closely involved in the design of the ISO 26000.

Pilot project

The above mentioned action led to the public contract for this pilot project, of which this is the final report. In the meeting of the College of Presidents on 9 November 2010 the PPS Sustainable Development and three additional Federal Public Services (FPS), have agreed to participate in this pilot project. In other words : the FPS Economy, S.M.E., Middle Class and Energy, the FPS Finance and the FPS Social Security. Consequently, this is the first test project on a worldwide level for the application of the ISO 26000 directive, as a means to include social responsibility entirely in the management strategy and operation of public organizations.

The goal was to give support and guidance to the four participating administrations in the implementation of the ISO 26 000 directive as well as the release of a report based on the GRI directives.
The mission has been executed by SUSTENUTO, an independent strategic consulting office acting as sustainability coach, located in Brussels – Belgium.
This final report is a description of the entire implementation process during one year in the four administrations. The report describes the design, framework conditions, assumptions, procedures and project results. It also formulates conclusions and gives recommendations how the ISO 2000 and GRI can be further used to enhance the social responsibility of the government organizations.

The report consists of four chapters:

1. *Framework & design:* the context, framework conditions and structures of the project.
2. *Process & approach:* the approach and working methods with the four administrations.
3. *Results & solutions:* what has been achieved and what has been learned.
4. *Conclusions & recommendations:* challenges and directions for future applications.

The annex contains an overview of all participating actors of the project partners.

1   Framework & design

This chapter describes the background, the objectives of and the design for the implementation of the pilot project.

1.1   Background

The Belgian federal authorities have, since long, through their PPS Sustainable Development, a policy to include and stimulate social responsibility (SR) in the companies and other actors in Belgium. Also internationally, SR, and the questioning on how organizations can contribute to a sustainable development in their operations, can no longer be ignored.

This ISO 26000 directive is new and little applied. Worldwide a whole dynamic around this extensive framework is active, which is voluntary and not a certification in itself. It is the most complete instrument to apply systematically SR in organizations, from management and policy to processes and daily operation. The application can be strengthened by a GRI report, showing the realizations of the organization in the SR field. The learning experiences in this pilot project, with the four administrations, give more insight into the applicability and usability of the ISO 26000 and the GRI and what possible pitfalls and success factors are. The pilot project is also a catalyst for other (government) organizations who want to get started.

The pilot project had a duration of one year (June 2011 through June 2012). The PPS Sustainable Development, sponsor and participant, released a budget for external guidance during the implementation of this pilot project in all four administrations.

1.2   Objectives

At the start of the project, two types of objectives were formulated. The general coordinating project (qualitative) goals and the resulting specific (and quantitative) goals for each participating administration.

General objectives:

    a. *Apply SR using* the ISO 26000 directives,
    b. *Gain learning experiences* by managing a SR process based on, the ISO 26000 in their own organization,
    c. *Realize capacity building*, enabling the actors to take the next step and make targeted choices for the SR implementations in the width of the federal organizations.

Specific objectives :

- Draft a SR action plan.
- Write a GRI report.

1.3   Structure

For the design of this one year project, the work was carried out with four very different administrations. For the effective operation, an organizational structure was put in place for the coordination of all actors involved. The pilot project was managed on two levels, so that learning experiences, communication and follow-up of the work could be coordinated.
    1. *The coordinating pilot project ... through a steering group,*
    2. *The internal project set-up for each administration ... through a core team and working groups*

This was guided by consultation between
    3. *the Sustenuto coaches on one hand ... through coaching*
    4. *and fine tuning with external experts ... through a peer review group.*

The project consisted thus of the following structure and teams.

	(1) Steering group FPS and PPS, ICDO, Sustenuto	
(3) Coach consultation Sustenuto	↕	*(4) Peer review group* experts + Sustenuto
	(2) Core team and working groups FPS' and PPS Sustenuto	
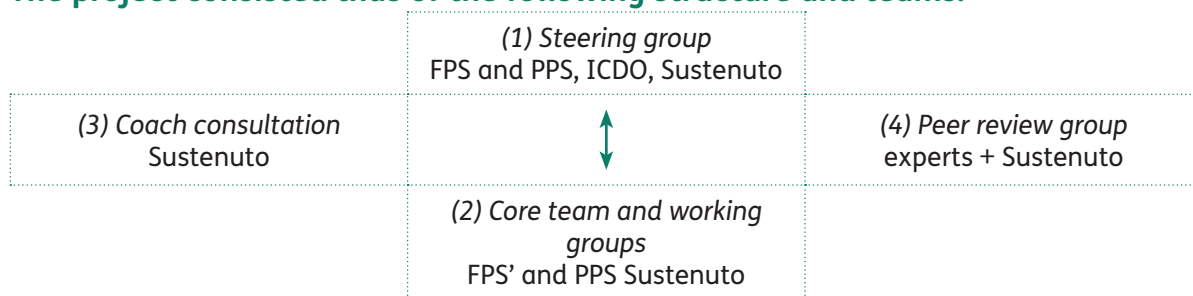
In total, 80 meetings were held for the execution of this pilot project:

- 3 at the steering group level
- 63 at the core team and working group level
- 11 between the coaches
- 3 at the peer review group level

Steering group
The general coordination of the project was monitored within the steering group. It consisted of members of the core teams and working groups of all four participating administrations and delegates of the Federal Interdepartmental Commission for Sustainable Development (ICSD). The steering group was also open to representatives from other public entities. The most important function of this platform was to enable the exchange of experiences between the FPS and PPS, to monitor the planning and the follow-up of the work done in each administration in the course of the process and to have a joint coordination concerning external communication on the project.

Core team and working groups
Within each administration existed a structure to enable the execution of the work. This consisted of one core team and dependent on the specific job, also of (ad-hoc) working groups. The core team did the follow-up of the entire project, took the necessary decisions and validated the work that had been done in the working groups. The working groups executed specific works, such as the analysis of the ISO 26000 subjects, or identification of the available information on GRI indicators. Between each FPS and PPS and the Sustenuto coach, there were dedicated contact persons. Within each administration an *account* was nominated, who was the internal project leader and taking care of the implementation and follow-up of the work, in cooperation with the Sustenuto *coach*.

Coach consultation
These five coaches, Dirk Le Roy, Bernard Mazijn, Ans Rossy, Koen Van Brabant, and Jean-Luc Van Kerckhoven met on a monthly basis to exchange the experiences and improve the approach. The Sustenuto coach fulfilled different tasks and roles. First the coordination of all the activities and the delivery of the necessary information and documents. Then, the facilitation of the working sessions with the core team and working groups, where the members were assisted in recognizing and understanding the SR, the substantive discussions and the elaboration of different exercises and activities. The coach also fulfilled the role of a sounding board for questions and reflections and as external inspector, to validate the various analysis work done in the core team and/or in the working teams.

Peer review group
The application of ISO 26000 in the organizations is still very recent. The Sustenuto team has organized a peer review group with Ingeborg Boon (of the Dutch Normalization Institute, DNI) and Hans Kröder (expert ISO 26000 within the Task Group Implementation and International SSRO representative within the International Drafting Task Force). The function of this review group was to be the sounding board and exchange experiences for a methodical development and process approach.

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2   Organization & approach

This chapter describes the participating organizations and the project approach.

2.1   Organizations

The pilot project ran for one year with two actual results for the implementation of the ISO26000 and the GRI, namely: each FPS and PPS prepared a SR action plan and issued a GRI report. Within that framework, two important starting points for the elaboration of the approach were identified:

1. *On the one hand a general methodology, a parallel process for all four organizations enabling comparison and exchange of experiences,*
2. *On the other hand deliver customized work that meets the singularity, needs and feasibility within each administration.*

The four participating administrations are very different from one another, already by the size of the organization. The headcount of the FPS Finance reaches approximately 26,000, the FPS Economy around 12,000, the FPS Social Security counts more or less 1,300 and the PPS Sustainable Development employs around 20 persons. Information concerning the activities of the four participating companies is given hereby.

The major task of the Federal Public Service (FPS) Finance is to collect and to manage a great deal of the financial resources, needed to meet the collective needs in Belgium. The FPS Finance also secures, through the Treasure, the balance between revenue and expenditure for the account of the Federal State, through loans, and by looking for the financial means to eliminate the deficit and/or investments of the surpluses. In the extension of this mission, they have to execute the payments accurately and error free, in terms of general expenses, in particular the remunerations of the State personnel and the reimbursement of the taxes. The mission of the Treasure also contains an extensive European and international part in the economic, financial and monetary fields. The FPS Finance takes also other important tasks of general interest on. By maintaining the Patrimony documentation, they contribute to guarantee the legal certainty, namely in the framework of the legal circulation of goods. With the control of flow of goods, the FPS Finance also contributes to the protection of the public health, the environment and the safety of the people and goods, especially the fight against illegal traffics and terrorism.

The Federal Public Service (FPS) Social Security carries out three strategic tasks, (1) policy coordination and –support in the field of social policy (2) social services to the users and (3) the fight against fraud. The FPS Social Security is a diversified organization and renders many services to users coming from various social groups. The best known are the compensations in favor of disabled persons, but also the self-employed persons, employers and workers can consult the FPS for specific services. The FPS Social Security also plays a very important historical role granting recognitions and compensation to civil war victims and the management of a valuable war archive. Concerning the fight against social fraud, the FPS Social Security has the mission to perform control actions in order to guarantee the correct application of the social security legislation (SS-regulations, annual vacation, work injuries, family allowances, sickness and disability insurance, DIMONA, part-time work, employment of foreign workers, etc.). Furthermore the FPS uses the expertise of a network of experts specialized in social fraud, to take initiatives and provide support in organizing international partnerships between the inspection services, sensitize the EU organizations for the Belgian initiatives, the active participation of Belgium to EU projects and the realization of studies around the phenomenon 'underground economy' and 'undeclared work'.

The Federal Public Service (FPS) Economy aims to stimulate the competitiveness of enterprises by being determined to follow the Lissabon strategy, that was decided by the European Union. Therefore the FPS Economy puts its entire activity on three objectives : (1) Acquire a thorough knowledge of the goods and services market. To make the enterprises more competitive, the FPS Economy develops an outstanding knowledge of the markets, their structure and their needs. The FPS Economy provides relevant and reliable statistics and sector analysis to the political, economical and academic worlds. They also deliver economical information indispensable for the profitability of the companies established in Belgium. (2) Give a good support to the goods and service market. Each support measure in the economic development area could be offset by anti-competition practices on the goods and service market. As a consequence, the FPS Economy ought to support the markets and control to stimulate the competitiveness of our enterprises. Therefore, the FPS Economy needs to take care of an efficient competition policy, formulate and apply a legislation adapted to the needs of the enterprises, protecting at the same time the consumers interests and the specific characteristics of the SME's. Given that these regulations are in fact European, the FPS Economy disposes of a certain level of expertise, based on which an active participation in the European decision making process is possible. Finally, the respect of the legal economical obligations should be monitored. (3) Stimulate the goods and service market. The FPS Economy does not want to be considered only as a market observer or regulator. The FPS Economy gives this market also the necessary incentives to make it more efficient and more competitive. In that regard, the FPS Economy uses two levers : innovation and external competitiveness. Due to the horizontal nature of this, innovation is part of each policy level of the FPS (sme-policy, energy, telecommunication, competitiveness...). In the field of external competitiveness, the FPS Economy supports the Belgian companies in positioning themselves on the international trade.

The PPS Sustainable Development (PPS SD) pursuits four strategic objectives. Be the driving force behind the policy related to sustainable development in Belgium. Be recognized as a reference policy in Belgium to support social responsibility. The vector is the integration of the federal strategy with regard to the sustainable development in all the policy sectors (short, mid and long term). Integrate sustainable development in the internal management of the PPS SD. The way the PPS SD wants to achieve this can be summarized in three words. Motivation. The PPS SD is not avoiding the challenge. Integration. The PPS SD is looking for long term solutions by a transversal approach. Innovation. The PPS SD wants to bring change through renewed ideas.

2.2   Project approach

Given the fact that it was a pilot project, the feasibility of it was checked with each administration. In the first consultation with the president, the account and other executives, specific framework conditions were discussed for the success of the project. Among other things, the desired ambition level of the management, the formulated objectives in the management plan, the application of management systems (EMAS) and/or other initiatives around SR in the organization, the internal dynamics concerning SR and the personnel availability, played a role in this. Based on the elements below, choices were made.

Scope of work

For the feasibility of the project in each organization, it was checked what was the required definition of work (scope). In other words, on which parts of the organization the implementation process should be applied. Starting points to define the desired scope were :
  a. Both sufficient involvement of the operational divisions (vertical) as from the umbrella services within the organization (horizontal) i.e. involving divisions delivering services to the 'end users' as well as the 'umbrella' services supporting them and doing so involve possible 'internal' stakeholders at different management levels
  b. The relevance of the core activities of the entire administration .
  c. The extent to which meaningful learning experience could be generated for the organization.
  d. The practical feasibility to include the pilot project during the planned project period.

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Internal stakeholders

For an effective functioning of the core team, it was decided, in addition to the presence of the leaders of the services falling in the scope of the activities, to have the presence of :
   a. The 'sustainability' responsible within the organization, mostly in charge of the 'Unit Sustainable Development'
   b. The organization representative in the ICSD, often but not necessarily the same person as the one responsible for sustainable development,
   c. People who sufficiently cover the width of the organization, certainly if the scope covered the entire organization,
   d. People with sufficient decision making power, to prevent unnecessary delays (for example concerning the GRI data collection) and guarantee a scheduled SR action plan.

In the context of further internal awareness around SR (also a general objective of this project) it was advised to include social representatives in this pilot project. This by including them into the core team or through other communication actions. Moreover, within the public organizations, the role of this representative is rather focused on 'co-management' of the social mission of the public organizations. Furthermore, work groupes were established for specific components of the activities and composed in function of the required expertise, as for the analysis for relevance, significance and priorities of the ISO 26000 subjects, the data collection and the redaction of the GRI report.

Feedback to the management

To guarantee the progress and internal decision making of the project, it was decided to include the presidents in the steering groups meetings. In practice, this did not happen except for the principal FPS Sustainable Development. However, this was overcome in three ways. The president of the PPS Sustainable Development informed the College of Presidents (a consultation at federal level between all FPS' and PPS' presidents), the core teams took care of the internal feedback to the management, or the president was part of the core team. Finally, additional meetings between coach and president also ensured the necessary feedback and fine tuning.

Generic approach, custom tailored

The ISO 26000 is designed as a guideline and not intended as a management system. Given the fact that the ISO 26000 guideline was very recent, at the time the pilot project was carried out there were little (tested) practices for a process approach. Various national Standard Institutes in Europe had already developed some instruments (usually in the language of the concerned country). These range from a management system based on ISO 26000, as in Austria or Spain (with or without a certification), to a very detailed web tool (with scores and percentages for the various parts) from the French AFNOR, or the self-declaration of the Dutch NEN, where an organization makes itself an assessment of its performances on the (rewritten) parts of the ISO 26000. Most of the components were still under development at the start of this pilot project.
The pilot project faced some specific challenges before the start of the effective development :
   • A timetable of maximum one year for the total project.
   • The requirement to always work either in French or in Dutch, at Belgian federal level,
   • The simultaneous application in four different administrations,
   • The combination of the ISO 26000 implementation process with the GRI reporting process

Based on international available instruments for the application of ISO 26000, the choice was made for a tailored approach of the project. Where, within the timeframe and the formulated goals, both the most important elements of the ISO 26000 could be addressed and in parallel also the necessary steps for a complete GRI reporting could be made. Focus of the analyses steps started from the ISO 26000 elements and the work for the GRI was subsequently adapted as much as possible.

2.2.1 Build Up

The process consisted of four phases. Each phase consisted of certain activities, which included the different activities of the ISO 26000 and the GRI (see attached schedule):

1. **determining** the boundary conditions for the activities within each administration,
2. **understand** and recognize the various key concepts of the ISO 26000 and GRI,
3. **execute** actual analyses of the different aspects to determine where one stood,
4. **convert** the analysis, reflections and data collection into concrete actions for improvement.

	Phase 1- preparation	Phase 2 – understand	Phase 3 – analyses	Phase 4 – results
Build Up Pilot Project ISO 26000 and GRI				
ISO	Preparation	Understand and recognize SR	Analyses	SR action plan
GRI	Preparation	Understand GRI-reporting format	GRI data collection	GRI report preparation
1.	Interview with the president	Validate and fix definitely scope for ISO and GRI	Complete analyses of all ISO-subjects according to relevance	Proposal SR objectives
2.	Scope proposal	Validate the 7 ISO principles and identification SR in core team	Analyses of the significance of the ISO-subjects	Preparation SR action plan
3.	Testing of 7 ISO principles	Identify core activities within scope FPS/PPS	Testing significances according to stakeholders visions	Proposal SR action plan to FPS/PPS management
4.	Check present indicators useful for GRI	Fix GRI-method and process per FPS/PPS	Define priorities for future SR actions with the core team	Preparation GRI-report
5.	Set composition of the core team FPS/PPS	Define the internal communication flow	Definite choices GRI indicators	Preparation evaluation report pilot project
6.	Official launch of the project on 1ste core team	Identify stakeholders	GRI-data collection	Discussion and conclusion pilot project
timing	1 June – 16 Sept 2011	16Sept – 3 Nov 2011	3 Nov – 1 Mar 2012	1 Mar – 31 May 2012

Phase 1 – Preparation

After the opening meeting with the PPS Sustainable Development a first consultation with the president, the account and sometimes with other managers was organized, to discuss the proposed approach. The focus of the preparation was:
- collect various information about and documents in the organization,
- discussion(s) with the president and the account on the objectives and scope of the project and a (first) information session on ISO 26000 ,
- formulation of boundary conditions and delimitation: scope and set up of teams.

The major goal of this phase was to create the exact boundary conditions for all four participating organizations, to ensure that each organization was sufficiently prepared for the real start of the project at the first steering group.

Phase 2 – Understand and recognize ISO 26000 and GRI

In this phase, the real work started in each administration. Given that ISO 26000 and the GRI were mostly entire new matters for the participants, the main focus was to develop the knowledge within the organizations. The main activities in this phase were:
- the identification of SR through a first acquaintance with and a discussion on the 7 ISO principles,
- the execution of a stakeholder mapping and defining the priority stakeholders and their expectations, as well as a discussion on the associated concepts, such as sphere of influence,
- the redaction of an internal communication plan.

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The major goal of this phase was a closer acquaintance with and understanding of SR and core principles of ISO 26000, through a number of activities. The goal of the communication plan was to follow up, with the core team, how the project was further promoted within the organization. This in order to inform the people and also to contribute to their further awareness around SR.

Phase 3 – Execution of the analyses

This was the longest phase of the project where a detailed examination took place to find out to what extent the subjects and various core elements of the ISO 26000 were actually present and applied in the organization. Information and data present for the GRI report, were also checked in detail.
The focus of the activities was here on:
• The analyses of the relevancy and significance of the 37 subjects (and sub aspects) for the organization and a detailed review of the presence and application of the 7 principles in relation to the governance pf the organization,
• The definition of priority subjects
• The inclusion of the possible expectations of the earlier defined priority stakeholders,
• Define the level and the indicators for the GRI report, based on present data as well as on the result of the analyses.

The major goal of this phase was clearly to gain insight in the possible challenges around SR and sustainability for the organization, where improvements could be made and where the strengths in the organization were. In this phase, the link between the ISO 26000 subjects and the GRI indicators could be established clearly. These 'gap analyses' formed the basis for the SR action plan in phase 4.

Phase 4 – Convert to concrete actions and results

This final phase consisted both in the writing of the SR action plans and the GRI report.
Main activities here were:
• Check for each of the identified priority subjects what the organization had already realized and what possible actions for improvement were desired
• Formulate recommendations for further SR actions, in relation to the most important process and integration elements of the ISO 26000, such as: how to involve the stakeholders, how to use its influence in the value chain, or how to measure & monitor.
• Publish the GRI report (based on the chosen level and scope).

The major goal of this last phase was mainly to understand *in what way* the organization could take on its social responsibility and which processes and procedures could be elaborated or improved more. In addition, the action plan offered the possibility to make SR visible in a concrete way, in the organization.

2.2.2 Supporting documents

The PPS Sustainable Development ensured that all the core team participants could dispose of an official French and Dutch version of the ISO 26000 guideline. Sustenuto developed, for each phase, supporting documents and instruments on ISO 26000, so that the teams could execute the exercises and work step-by-step. Also, the documents made by GRI were available to the core team members, namely: 'Lets report template', GRI 3.1 Technical Protocol, GRI Public Agency Supplement, the GRI Content Index for levels C and B and the GRI-ISO comparison. At the steering committee meetings, all participants received various presentations.

2.2.3 Participation & communication

Participation plays a crucial role in the shaping of sustainable development and take on social responsibility. This can only happen with the active commitment and involvement of the people. The intent of this pilot project was to push the people in the organization to participate actively as much as possible, so they got embedded in SR and by executing the work themselves, took 'ownership' of

their own learning process.

Participation is not possible without effective communication. Hence the attention for an internal communication plan. The intranet platform (Yammer) which enabled the exchange between the different participating administrations was also used. The steering group also agreed on how the communication towards third parties would be done. Therefore, the PPS Sustainable Development as principal and project leader, did the general communication on external demands and in addition each FPS and PPS defined themselves with whom, when and how they wanted to communicate externally.

3.   Results & outcomes

This chapter elaborates on the important results of the pilot project per FPS and PPS and what was achieved. Here, a distinction is made between the results and solutions and how this feedback is related to the original objectives.

Results (or outputs) are linked to the direct, tangible, effects of a project and the efforts needed. Results are linked to specific goals; in this case: elaborate a SR action plan and prepare a GRI report.

Outcomes concern the indirect, wider effects (also external to the own organization) one wants to achieve with a project and the activities. Outcomes are linked to the general objectives; in this case: gain learning experience and realize capacity building for a better implementation of SR. The outcome is often influenced by more factors than solely the delivered efforts.

3.1   Project results

For each administration (in order of their size) the achieved results are described below, as well as the most important activities that led to those results.
The project results comment on the:
- Scope: delimitation within the organization for participation to the pilot project
- Organization: the internal structure for execution of the pilot project
- Stakeholders: results of the stakeholders approach
- Communication: implemented internal communication actions
- SR action plan
- GRI report

First some common results for each of these aspect are explained.

Scope

The scoping on ISO and GRI is a varied story. Because of the participation of the 4 administrations, every variation was addressed,: (1) implementation of ISO and GRI at the entire organization level (2) implementation by division for the ISO and at the entire organization level for the GRI (3) implementation by division for the ISO and the GRI. The implementation at division level was meant as pilot for a later implementation at organization level. This creates the possibility to adapt the methodology, if necessary, based on the learning experience of the pilot phase.

Organisation

It is important to describe the context in which the Belgian administrations are. They are in constant movement. The started reform , the so-called Copernicus reform and the implementation of the Coperfin agreements, are still ongoing. These reforms imply drastic changes amongst others in Human Resources, logistics, ICT systems. Add to these a ISO 26000 process is not obvious in terms of time allocation and capacity in an organization. Furthermore, various administrations still had an interim president for a long time, who due to the long absence of a government in Belgium could not be appointed. In short, the participating administrations were all at different levels in the change process, which did not facilitate the integration of the ISO 26000 project.

Stakeholders

The SR core element, in the ISO 26000 as well as in the GRI, is to involve the stakeholders and (systematically) engage in a dialog. During this pilot project the possibility was also given to start with an 'active' stakeholders consultation or stakeholders dialog to define priority subjects. This did not take place in neither of the four administrations. There were several reasons for that, the main reason being the relative short time in which the teams had to do a lot of work. Also, putting in place a dialog process requests a thorough preparation and creates expectations with the stakeholders, expectations that the organization should be able to deliver at a later stage. This became obvious at the end of the project.

In this project, a so-called 'passive' stakeholders check was applied. Based on the stakeholder mapping, the teams defined what they thought the priority stakeholders would expect from the organization (or the department). With the relevance, significance and priority definition, the team members

then verified how the concerned stakeholders would assess the subject. Based on the estimates, the earlier defined priorities were sometimes adapted.

Communication

The participating partners were stimulated in an early stage, during the project, to think in what way both internally, between the administrations, as externally, they wanted to communicate and what the suitable means and channels were for this action :
- For the internal communication, the core teams identified communication actions. The main objective was to inform people, from the organization, on the progress of the project and contribute to further knowledge development on SR , ISO 260000 and GRI in the organization. This ranged from ad hoc articles and notices to a truly elaborated communication plan.
- In order to promote the exchange between the organizations, the social medium platform 'Yammer' (intra federal) was presented by the FPS Social Security. The participants could post material themselves. After an enthusiastic start, the use of it slowed down.
- The proposals for external communication varied from including the social consultation which was organized at a federal level in the 'Basic Consultation Committee' to the organization of a 'Citizen workshop' (atelier de citoyen), where a dialogue could start with an even much bigger group of stakeholders. These ideas were not yet implemented mainly because each organization wanted to gain sufficient experience to begin with. Through coordination within the steering group, some press releases were launched during the project.

GRI report

The GRI implementation went through different processes and through various formats. On the one hand, being integrated in the annual reporting process of the administration, and on the other hand being set up as a separate reporting exercise. This led to 2 GRI reports at B-level and 2 GRI reports at C-level, first at the entire organization level and second at a specific division level.

SR Action plan

For the four participating administrations, a limited to significant integration of the ISO 26000 guidelines happened with the development at the organization or division level of a definition of the priorities and the development of an action plan with regard to their activities.
In total, in the 4 government bodies were, approximately
- 193 aspects considered as relevant,
- 167 aspects of which considered significant and
- 117 aspects judged as priority
- 62 actions were developed for these priorities

Generally, it can be said that there was a clear increase of knowledge on what sustainability means to the organization, what the different themes are, understood by sustainability, and what this means relative to responsibility for the various administrations, how this can be derived from the application of the ISO guidelines and consequently what actions can be defined and developed within the organization.

In addition to these general findings, this report also provides insights in the concrete outcome resulting from the ISO 26000 implementation. Hereafter, an overview is presented of actions taken within the four government services. A more extensive presentation of the results, for all four participating organizations, can be found in the Dutch or French report.

3.1.1   FPS Finances

The scope for the ISO 26000 work concerned Fleet. Fleet is the department within FPS Finances, responsible for the management of the own car park. Core task is the fleet management (not the purchase). The FPS Finances has 750 operational vehicles.

Following actions were proposed for Fleet:
- Develop the operational example function of fleet
- Stimulate personnel towards environment- friendly driving behavior
- Adapt the use of the car park to the real needs
- Implement sustainability in the fleet purchase management
- Company car policy
- Implement sustainability in the fleet maintenance
- Customer service to solve complaints
- Exchange best practices concerning fleet management with other FPS's
- Exchange SR experiences with other FPS FIN departments

The scope for the GRI concerned the entire FPS Finances. The 2011 annual report had sustainability as specific topic. As for the application level, the choice went for the GRI C-level. The annual report can be consulted on following link minfin.fgov.be/portail2/nl/publications/index.htm.

3.1.2   FPS Economy

The scope for ISO 26000 and GRI concerned the Department Mediation of the Directorate-General Control and Mediation. The Department Mediation of the Directorate-General Control and Mediation contributes to the proper functioning of the market of goods and services by promoting alternative settlement of disputes in commercial matters. This department has a staff of 120 persons.
The Mediation Department has developed an action plan at different levels. One, short term actions to be taken within the Department; Second, recommendations and proposals at the FPS level. Within the Department Mediation, the actions are related to human rights, consumer affairs and social involvement.

The proposed actions were:

- All groups and layers of the population ought to be reached, cooperation with the field organizations, make efforts to close the digital gap …
- Better inform the consumers and their organization concerning the capabilities in order to make sure that the expectations are in-line with the delivered services.
- Better explain in advance the needed conditions to obtain support from the Department Mediation
- If possible, define a more precise term and when the mediation will be closed.
- Build in safety mechanisms to guarantee the privacy and the confidentiality.
- Communicate sufficiently the environment-friendly aspects

In addition, the Department Mediation proposed a list of recommendations for the FPS. Starting from the principle that the SR is in any case an integral part of a government service, it is considered necessary to explicit this engagement in the mission and values of the FPS, the code of conduct and deontology.
- Adapt the elevators for visually impaired.
- Take into account the SR-aspects in the suppliers' choice. Example : fair labor practices, environmentally conscious…
- Include explicitly the principles of SR in the management documents and code of conduct, for example in the values and deontology of the public servant.
- Install mechanisms to stimulate Social Responsibility (SR)
- Install an ISO 26000-network.
- "ISO 26000 moment" during each service meeting.
- Increase the capacity to undertake SR actions.
- Sensitize/inform the workers permanently on ISO 26000. Also already in the hiring process

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- Obtain the EMAS-certificate for all the FPS buildings.
- Enter anonymous resumes in the selection process (resumes without name, photo, age ...)
- Make the selection procedures more uniform and transparent.
- More transparency in the services with regard to remuneration and extra remuneration, compensation, vacation ...
- Sufficient communication concerning the possibilities existing for social protection: active approach of the workers.
- Disclose the minutes of the SCC's (Special Consultative Committee).
- Install defibrillators on each floor, control and increase the safety on a regular basis. Example : effective control of the emergency lighting, alarm and broadcasting ...

3.1.3 FPS Social Security

The scope for both the ISO 26000 as the GRI work concerned the entire FPS Social Security. The B-level was chosen for the GRI report. The organization has already taken various steps towards organizational change and the implementation of ISO 26000 can support phase 3°, the sustainability of the organization. Actions that came forward during the consultation for the ISO 26000 implementation, include:

- Increase SR in the value chain (sphere of influence): internal consultation about a possible approach (with partners).
- Under the ISO 26000-denominator 'Fair marketing': improve the information delivery for the 'customers'
- Deliver contributions to sustainable programs and partnerships with actors in the community.

3.1.4 PPS Sustainable Development

The PPS Sustainable Development has a special role in this pilot project. The department was not only the driver the originator and a participant, but has, within the federal authorities, also the task to further embed Sustainable Development and SR and give support with knowledge and various instruments.

Following actions were defined in the implementation of ISO 26000 :
- Strengthening of the internal structure and organization
- Strengthening of the internal transparency
- Strengthening of the values
- Development of a broader HR-policy
- More happy employees
- Strengthening of the employees' competences
- Strengthening welcome practice for new employees
- Ambitious sustainable purchasing policy
- Honest, to the point and unbiased communication
- Consumers data protection
- Increase SR in the sphere of influence
- Support SR in the sphere of influence
- Organization of a stakeholders dialog

A GRI report, for the entire organization, was established. It will be published in autumn and concerns level B. As soon as it is published, the GRI report will be available on the following link www.poddo.be/nl/inhoud/publicaties-0.

3.2   Project outcomes

The general project objectives were, next to the *application* of SR using ISO 26000 guidelines, to:
- *Gain learning experience* by managing a SR process based on ISO 26000 in the own organization, and
- *Realization of capacity building*, that allows the actors to take the next steps and make targeted choices for the SR implementation in the width of the federal administrations.

Generally, it can be observed that the knowledge on social responsibility has increased with the people who participated in the project and that there is more insight in what it can mean for a department or an organization. Gradually during the project, a better comprehension of the (sometimes complex) material and SR subjects coming from ISO 26000 occurred.This led to two types of insight:
1. *SR was already used, but could not be named as such in the past,*
2. *It was discovered that certain subjects, which at first sight were not relevant for the functioning, such as ex. human rights, upon further debate and exchange contained indeed relevant aspects for the own functioning .*

Two examples. At the FPS Economy, Mediation Service, it was noted that discrimination prevention of vulnerable groups (and reaching all groups of populations) was relevant for the core task of the service, the complaint handlings and the type of instruments (such as internet), they used for the purpose. Equal access to information and non-discrimination seem to be a relevant subject for the other FPS's within the different core tasks.

At the FPS Finances, Davo service, it became clear that alimony provision in itself is a concrete implementation of the human right. This makes it evident that with the ISO 26000 guideline, a positive interpretation can be given to the various SR concepts. This is also important for the communication within the organization on the subject.

The span of the final effects and the extent to which the learning process and capacity is built up in this pilot project, is also dependent on the chosen scope and the way on how this project and the learning processes is communicated internally. It became obvious that ISO 26000 and the GRI offer a frame to examine its own operation from a perspective of sustainability and social responsibility.

The long-term effects and possible impacts of this project, in the broader sense, are still not foreseeable. Furthermore, they also depend of various other factors. Given the worldwide interest for ISO 26000 and the learning processes coming from this unique pilot project done in government organizations, it can be stated that the publication of the first GRI reports of these four administrations, as well as the further external communication around this project and the release of the final report, will lead to increased awareness and sensitization and will contribute to increased dynamics around introducing SR in the organizations using instruments such as ISO 26000 and GRI.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter contains the most important findings from this pilot project and the recommendations for the future.

4.1 Conclusions

The conclusions are taken at the level of the administrative organization, content and instruments of ISO 26000 and GRI and the present process for the introduction, that were important to meet the project objectives and the final results and solutions. The conclusions look at the extent in which the project objectives were effectively reached, the degree of relevance for future use of the ISO 26000 and GRI instruments to anchor social responsibility in the governmental organizations.

4.1.1 Strategy for operational sustainability engagement

The manner in which ISO 26000 is used depends on the management's vision and goals in the organization for sustainable development and their sense of social responsibility. This can be done based on a (long term) strategy as well as a (short term) operational engagement. With a strategic vision and engagement, the meta level, the 'why' questions, of the ISO 26000 are tackled, where debates with the top management regarding principles, use of the sphere of influence, processes for continuous stakeholders dialog, good management and management tools, play an important role. At a more operational definition, one answers the 'what and how' question more rapidly and it is verified how priority subjects can be transformed in concrete actions for improvement and processes in the organization. A strategic engagement implies also other remote conditions than the operational approach, such as a strong management involvement.

The FPS and PPS Sustainable Development management is involved through explicit support from the president. This is in itself essential, but the interaction remains limited for what concerns the FPS'. This makes that the exercise has a rather operational character than a strategic implementation.

The context related conditions preventing a strategic implementation are among other things (1) the long-standing ongoing strategic exercises that makes any additional strategic project difficult (2) insufficient inclusion in the strategic FPS' processes, what requires more interaction with the management (3) a smaller scope made it very difficult for the (operational) teams to hold a debate about and make the link with organization-wide subjects such as vision & strategy, values & principles, use of sphere of influence, etc. (4) the composition of the teams: this was sometimes based on voluntary participation, sometimes on functional input and the composition was often not enough representative. Nevertheless, successes were realized. This when the strategic or coordination department got involved in the exercise, evaluating the process against the strategic planning. It becomes even stronger, when the outcome of the exercise is related to the management plans and the consequences of the priorities and their actions evaluated against the action plans for the coming years.

In the administrative area, the following conclusions can be taken:

1. *At the start of the project, it was clear that there was not yet a full support from all the presidents and not enough knowledge on the internal impact of the project. Except for the commitments by the College of Presidents in November 2010 what the participation concerns, no further communication was done until the first meeting from the coaches with the president, account and some executives (phase 1 of the project). Therefore, the project was not immediately found on the 'radar' of all the presidents. Thus more time had to be invested in ensuring a number of preconditions. This resulted in a delayed start. First, the people responsible needed to accept to be part of the game and understand what this pilot project meant in practice, what the content was of ISO 26000 (and why it was relevant for the organization) and what was desirable for the execution (including decisions on: scope, people input, time, etc..)*
2. *The steering committee has in reality played a far less 'learning' platform role as was initially planned. For the core teams, the three meetings happened to be mainly a moment to share the work status with the colleagues of the other FPS' and PPS' and receive information on the steps in the process. A better strategic approach for the integration of ISO 26000 and GRI, a better knowledge of the participants with SR and a less traditional meeting structure, could stimulate a direct dialogue and debate.*

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3. *In general, it was difficult to organize the meetings on a regular basis. There are several reasons : (1) the overbooked agendas of the concerned persons (2) the more operational approach of the pilot project making that it was always considered as an additional traject. The somewhat difficult planning however was compensated by the motivation of the concerned persons.*
4. *In this pilot project, also a pioneers project, both at the level of the methodology as the elaboration in the public organizations, 'learning by doing' took an important place. Be realistic in what was possible, was paramount. It was obvious from the start that not each administration could or would do the exercise for the entire organization. Hence sometimes the choice for a smaller scope.*

4.1.2   Step by step implementation of ISO 26000 and GRI

The purpose of this one-year project was to implement ISO 26000 as well as to issue a GRI report. It should be taken into account that hardly a good half year ago ISO 26000 was voted when this project started. In other words, it is a pioneers project to start with ISO 26000 and to let it join a GRI reporting.

Because both processes needed to run more or less in parallel, much confusion existed among the participants regarding the relation between both. Although both instruments have many similarities, at the same time another terminology is used and the GRI has another goal than ISO 26000. An additional complicating factor was that the chosen scope for the pilot project for the ISO 26000 exercise, did not necessarily correspond to the one chosen for the GRI report. The ISO 26000 was the focus and the starting point of this project.

Building around SR, an organization is better off to define first (via the ISO 26000) what its position is regarding SR and state clearly what the wished expected goals and improvements are, start a dialogue with the stakeholders on this, follow-up with actions and finally write a GRI report on the subject. Now this had to be done almost in parallel, due to time pressure.

4.1.3   Complexity when implementing ISO 26000 and GRI

This pilot project also served as methodology test of the ISO 26000 instruments and GRI in the government organizations. The participants did not find the ISO 26000 easy and user friendly. Mainly, the presentation of the ISO 26000 documents, and to a lesser extent, the GRI, made it overwhelming in terms of structure and content. The subjects analyses and the aspects, as well as the principles from ISO 26000, were often found to be too detailed and/or too complex. Because of the lack of sustainable development knowledge and SR, a frame was missing that could be used as an immediate starting base. The result is that phase 1 was mainly used to construct the correct framework. The more concrete GRI indicators brought sometimes more grip. The concrete analyses documents had the advantage to make the approach more concrete, being, initially, a little more philosophic for certain participants. The disadvantage is that some restricted themselves using a 'checklist' approach without further reflection.

Following aspects and observations have to be mentionned:

1. ***The definition of the relevance and significance of the core themes and subjects.*** *The ISO 26000 (pages. 80 and 81) uses here many criteria where no distinction is made on what criteria are more or less important. Partly as a result, a good understanding of the difference between relevancy (**is there concern?**) and significance (**the level of concern**) was pretty difficult for the participants. Also they found that depending on what criteria were taken into account, the results differed.*
2. ***How relevant are the ISO 26000 subjects for the government organizations?*** *It was felt that ISO 26000 was mainly geared to companies. The result was that the analyses was often considered being too detailed and the subject list not enough relevant for the own organization. However, this was partly due to the chosen scope.*
3. ***How relevant are the GRI indicators for government organizations?*** *A similar problem was experienced with the GRI reporting. It appeared that mainly the economic indicators are hardly appropriate for government organizations and also the Public Agency supplement (version 2005, being under revision) did not offer the needed additional information.*

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4. ***Better an integrated GRI reporting.*** *The process where the GRI reporting is included in the annual report, makes that the whole process is crystal-clear (the planning of the annual reporting is not new and clearly outlined with intermediate milestones) plus the fact that the available resources are accessible. There is a team in place consisting of people from strategy, coordination and communication. In addition, the data collection is also well structured. The enlargement to come to GRI indicators happens easily. There where the GRI reporting becomes a complete new (additional) reporting, the process needs to be reinvented from the beginning. This makes the choice, that may seem easier in the beginning, much more difficult in its implementation in real life.*
5. ***Another approach.*** *To overcome that complexity and the large size of information, the PPS SD decided, at the analyses phase, to go, in parallel, for a direct, quicker approach. From the own knowledge and experience with SR, a list was drawn with possible actions related to the SR themes of the ISO 26000. The advantage is that from the practical experience one can come directly to actions.*
6. ***Short available timeframe.*** *The implementation of SR in a government organization, goes through the specific context of policy development and execution, legislative framework and longer decision-making processes, often slower than in a company. So one year is certainly not long (enough) to be able to realize the complete strategic as well as operational implementation. In addition, the methodology developments evolved during the project, especially the necessary fine tunings. This made that the core teams and the working groups both applied and at the same time offered useful input for adaptation during the process.*

4.1.4 Participation and stakeholder input

The participation of the employees went mainly through the working groups that were set up. Further participation varied per FPS/PPS and was influenced by different factors. Although the scope choice (a department or the entire organization) has an influence on the possible width of participation in the organization, it is in itself no limitation for active participation of the employees. More important is the support coming top down and from project managers who support the project and are able to enthusiasm the people. Also the way how further communication and knowledge building is organized, is very important for the degree of participation.

Following findings were made:
1. *The final participation and dynamic in the teams depended on the internal project leader, the account, and the degree of support for the project given by the management.*
2. *An active stakeholders dialogue came a little too early for this pilot project. The passive stakeholder exercise contributed to more awareness concerning SR and the understanding that the judgment about the importance of various themes is determined not only by the organization itself.*

4.1.5 Communication & capacity build up

The internal communication differed greatly per administration. The communication between the administration, consisted mainly in the steering group meetings and the use of the social site Yammer. The external communication was rather sparse. This relative restraint in communication during the process ought to be understood from a communication culture, the specific context of the government organization and this first pilot project. Pro-active communication supposes a broad adhesion and support from the top and sufficient experience and therefore have confidence in what one has to say. The first GRI-report was a concrete result and thus eventually the most important communication instrument for the administrations in this project.

The extent to which actual capacity build-up and knowledge development with the members of the personnel has occurred, in the organization, is difficult to evaluate at this point in time. Its real effect appears after a certain time and could be tested again after one year. How this is evolving will also depend on the engagements contained in the first GRI report and the SR action plan and the manner how the organization wants to continue the SR process.

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4.1.6   Organization, ownership and support

The people in the organization are crucial for a successful implementation process of SR. This concerns both the way in which one organizes , how we exchange information with each other and take responsibility, as how one becomes the owner of the process and what kind of support is suitable. The participation of four organizations and the variation in the internal approach delivered following learning points.

Following learning points could be taken:

1. *The composition of the teams (core team and working groups) happened in two ways: from voluntary participation ('who wants to participate in the project?') to the functional choice within the scope. For both, something can be said certainly in the context of a voluntary pilot project. However, it turned out eventually that the composition of the teams were not always in balance or representative in the context of voluntary participation, which had an impact in the definition of the priorities and the elaboration of the SR action plan. So there was a lack in some core teams of a representative of the Cell Sustainable Development or environment expertise. Possible missing expertise was sometimes compensated in the working groups. Within a functional choice, it was made sure that the executives, the concerned internal experts and other relevant departments, such as strategy and communication and sustainable development, were sufficiently represented.*
2. *The degree to which ownership was taken up, was different for each team. The responsibilities increased with the progress of the process and once there was a better link with the material. There where ownership was less present, often a higher level of support was requested from the external coach for the implementation of the work.*

4.2   Recommendations

This pilot project with the four administrations from the Belgian Federal Government, has resulted in many valuable learning processes, both at Directors' level as well as at the level of content and process. Previous conclusions and 'lessons learned' show important leads for the realization of a broader deployment of the objective of this project, namely a more extensive further implementation of SR to all federal administrations.

4.2.1   At Management level

1.   Continuation of the federal commitment

A commitment taken at a broader and higher (federal) directors' level to include the application of SR as a management objective in the framework of sustainable development within the government organizations, will certainly be an incentive for a thorough implementation. Part of such a commitment is to sufficiently organize the existing platforms in a straight line, where exchanges concerning sustainability take place such as the ICSD. The persons representing the organization within the ICSD ought to be involved in the implementation of ISO 26000 and GRI. This makes a continuous exchange possible at a higher level between the administrations.

2.   Put in place a course of action at management level

An effective implementation becomes real when, next to a purely thematic operational approach, there also exists a process plan that sufficiently includes management to get acquainted with SR and be part of the decision process to the extent that these are a priority for the organization. This forms the basis for the commitment that the organization can take for the further elaboration of the action plan. There is no need for this management involvement to be quite so intensive and can build on the material prepared by the work groups. Put in place a course of action at management level can be done in different ways. There where one wants to give a strategic direction to the SR approach, it is necessary to plan several preparatory workshops with the management. The priority subjects are being prepared by a work group where validation and addition is done by the management. At that point in time, management is also responsible for the definition of the level of ambition concerning these subjects. What are the concrete objectives that one wants to achieve. Such a preparation is not needed there where management is involved at a low level. Here management can, based on their

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vision, come up with topics that they want to work on. This forms a basis for the SR action, which, in the further implementation, can be supported by a more strategic reflection.

3.   Choice for the scope of work.

The ISO 26000 and GRI are designed for the entire organization. But to do everything at once is not always an option, certainly if one wants to start with one project. For large administration, it is more suitable to define a clear scope. Furthermore, wanting to do too much could discourage people; a smaller scope can improve the internal dynamics.

The scope needs to be as well *representative as relevant* for the organization, so that sufficient meaningful learnings can be gained.

In the choice of a scope, one should take the following into consideration:
  a. Have sufficient width and depth in the organization chain, in order to permit that, for example, external services or sub-regional structures can be involved
  b. Choose services, departments, etc. which belong to the *core* activities of the organization. Ultimately, an organization should improve on the impacts it has on the society with its core activities.

4.   Involve strategy departement

The project has shown that, when an implementation is considered a 'pilot' and applied on a smaller scale, the strategy department can play an essential role in the follow up and so prepare the scale upgrade. Regardless the scale of the implementation, the integration of SR actions inside the classic management structure is necessary to be able to do it and effectively bring SR from the border to the core of the organization. This means that the SR actions are also subject to processes of testing, fine tuning by the services, follow up of the execution and afterwards evaluation.

5.   Relate action relative to existing management plans

This is an open door but therefore not less important. The application of ISO 26000 results in a SR action plan, themes where one wants more commitment. These actions reinforce existing actions within a management plan, or are a supplement to these. These actions can only become effective when entirely included in the management plans of the organizations and therefore need to follow the administrative channels in order to be accepted at management level.

4.2.2   Methodologies and instruments ISO 26000 and GRI

The following recommendations on the methodology and the instruments of ISO 26000 and GRI can be made based on the results and the conclusions of the pilot project:

1.   No simultaneous start-up of ISO 26000 and GRI

It is not necessarily desirable to combine an implementation pilot project of ISO 26000 and GRI. Certainly when the organization is at a starting point in the matter of CSR. Additionally, a simplification is needed in these organizations in order to allow the people to grow with such a project and subject. The ISO 26000 guidelines are, quite overwhelming for beginners in this area. The sustainability reporting should best be started once one has enough awareness of the real materiality and has already taken action on this subject.

2.   Better link between ISO 26000 and GRI

This does not mean that no link can exist between ISO 26000 and GRI, on the contrary. The link between ISO and GRI can work perfectly. GRI aims to well define the materiality. Via the priority definition, ISO lends itself to a more fundamental exercise. The tools also focus to make the direct link between the themes and various indicators of the GRI visible. This results in the fact that the GRI implementation is, generally, better understood and applied. Both instruments could even be better harmonized in a more flexible way.

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3.   Adjustment for the government

The practical tools which support the process work in the ISO 26000 arena in the organization, need to be more refined and adapted to the government organization. This contributes to a bigger usability in the organization, also on a longer term, so that the process of continuous improvement can also be continued. The challenges are on different levels.

    a. Making up a list (with sustainability experts and people from the government organization), with subjects from ISO 26000 which are more focused on the relevancy for a government organization. This increases the effectiveness and user-friendliness. This should not mean that the broad frame of subjects reached by ISO 26000 should be lost in this fine tuning or that this leads to the association of topics, that would destroy a wider debate on sustainability for the organization.

    b. An adjustment of the GRI economic indicators and an up-date of the Public Agency supplement,

    c. Edit a comparison table from ISO 26000 to the GRI,

    d. An adaptation of the tools (software) for reporting and monitoring, where GRI and ISO 26000 can be linked in a simple way.

4.   Methodology manual

It will undeniably be a big debate within the ISO environments. The ISO 26000 is conceived as a guideline and not as a management instrument. Application of the guideline in this pilot project shows however that there is much space for interpretation and application. Thus it seems sensible to develop a methodology manual that could help organizations with the application. This recommendation is done within the realization that one reaches a grey zone of guidelines and management instrument, which will require a clear communication in such a methodology manual.

4.2.3 Process aspects

1.   Participation and stakeholder input

For organizations that are not very far yet in the strategic thinking about SR, it could be suitable to proceed via their own analyses based on ISO 26000. In order to obtain a view on what the priority subjects are, identify the important stakeholders and what ambitions for improvement and possible actions can be formulated. They can then be tested and used in a dialogue with the stakeholders. Other organizations, which are already further in the SR process, can perform, in a manner of speaking, their own analyses in parallel by involving the stakeholders. A lot will depend from the willingness and openness in the organization for internal and external stakeholders feedback and the presence of a company culture for 'learning together', ownership and participation. In order to facilitate this further, a recommendation could be elaborated on how to organize a stakeholder participation, after the publishing of the GRI report.

2.   Communication and capacity build-up.

Sufficient time needs to be taken for the learning process on SR, the relation between sustainable development and the content of ISO 26000 and GRI. To do this, an internal communication campaign can be very useful. To that end, it is important that, from the beginning the company communication services and Human Resources be included. This makes it possible to examine how one wants to communicate in the organization, so that the learning process can develop rapidly.

In the framework of broadening the use of ISO 26000 in other (federal) administrations, it is advisable to set up, between the administrations, interactive platforms, for exchange and learning. This cannot be realized with the traditional forms of meetings, but requires interactive learning sessions between 'peers', as well through 'face to face' contact as well as via electronic resources. It is meaningful to check in how far existing platforms, such as ICSD or the Cells Sustainable Development, can play a role herein.

3. Internal teams, ownership and guidance

For an effective implementation process, important adequate internal structures and guidance are key elements to success.

- The implementation process is carried and coordinated by a core or project team, composed by management representatives, responsible for sustainable development and possibly also colleagues from strategy and communication. This means that the set-up is preferably not done on a voluntary basis but to involve responsible managers and experts. If desired, this project team can be supplemented with volunteers. It is mandatory for the core team (to be able) to take decision in the process. Linked to that and in function of the type of work, (ad-hoc) work groups will be created. Herein are people with specific expertise indispensable for the elaboration of analyses, data collection, set up and execution of actions and reporting.
- The appointment of an internal project leader. This persons needs to be able to motivate people and be a leader of the project. Enough time will be allocated to this person. Knowledge and experience with sustainability is also essential.
- External guidance is desirable, certainly if the organization is still little involved in SR, or is mainly working at an operational level, but not yet strategic. The role of the external coach is being a coach, a facilitator and is also to validate the work. The effectiveness of the process is served with a good working relationship between the external coach and the internal project leader, who, so to say is the right hand in the organization and a good antenna for the dynamic, questions and dilemmas coming from within the organization.
- To ensure that an organization is learning as fast as possible and building up internal capacity, the internal project leader (or multiple persons) can be trained during the process by an external coach. A kind of 'train the trainer' coaching journey. The 'train the trainer' formula is also relevant for better usage of existing internal knowledge within the administrations.

Postscript

This pilot project, of one year, was a first experience within government organizations with ISO 26000 and GRI. The project was a test case, where a lot has been learned. However, the process is thus not yet completed. The prepared action plans SR and the GRI report (whether or not as part of the regular annual report) are the first building blocks for further anchoring in the 4 administrations and beyond. The international dynamic that has started with ISO 26000 is growing constantly. This unique project can be an important catalyst for the future.

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Katherina Wallyn, Internal Environmental Care/Sustainable Nutrition
Bart Vandermosten, Sustainable Events
Hamida Idrissi, Sustainable Purchases
Joëlle Pichel
Nicolas Wesolowski

Attachment 2 List with abbreviations

ICSD   Interdepartmental Commission for Sustainable Development

PPS SD   Public Planning Services Sustainable Development

FPS   Federal Public Service

SR   Social Responsibility

GRI   Global Reporting Initiative

EMAS   Environmental Management and Auditing System

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Sustenuto
Sustainability Coach