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Environmental management — Environmental communication — Guidelines and examples

Management environnemental — Communication environnementale — Lignes directrices et exemples

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ISO copyright office
CP 401 • Ch. de Blandonnet 8
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva
Phone: +41 22 749 01 11
Fax: +41 22 749 09 47
Email: copyright@iso.org
Website: www.iso.org

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Contents

Page

Foreword ... **iv**
Introduction ... **v**
1 Scope ... **1**
2 Normative references ... **1**
3 Terms and definitions ... **1**
4 Principles of environmental communication ... **2**
4.1 General ... 2
4.2 Principles ... 3
4.2.1 Transparency ... 3
4.2.2 Appropriateness ... 3
4.2.3 Credibility ... 3
4.2.4 Clarity ... 3
4.2.5 Regionality ... 3
5 Environmental communication policy ... **3**
5.1 Management commitment ... 3
5.2 Developing the policy ... 4
6 Environmental communication strategy ... **4**
6.1 General considerations ... 4
6.2 Integrating environmental communication into the organization's general communication process ... 5
6.3 Resource efficiency ... 6
6.4 Establishing environmental communication objectives ... 6
6.5 Identifying interested parties ... 7
7 Environmental communication activities ... **8**
7.1 Planning an environmental communication activity ... 8
7.1.1 General ... 8
7.1.2 Situational analysis ... 9
7.1.3 Setting environmental communication objectives ... 10
7.1.4 Identifying target groups ... 11
7.1.5 Defining geographic scope ... 12
7.1.6 Identifying environmental information ... 12
7.2 Selecting environmental communication content, approaches and tools ... 14
7.2.1 General ... 14
7.2.2 Defining responsibilities and involvement (internal and external) ... 21
7.2.3 Tracking input from interested parties ... 22
7.2.4 Planning for environmental communication activities on environmental crises and emergencies ... 22
7.2.5 Establishing a communication plan ... 23
7.3 Performing an environmental communication activity ... 24
7.3.1 Collecting and evaluating data ... 24
7.3.2 Conducting environmental communication activities ... 24
7.3.3 Recording and responding to feedback ... 25
7.4 Evaluating environmental communication ... 26
7.5 Conducting management review and planning revisions ... 27
Annex A (informative) **Environmental communication within the ISO 14000 family** ... **28**
Bibliography ... **31**

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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).

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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.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 207, *Environmental management*, Subcommittee SC 4, *Environmental performance evaluation,* 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 second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 14063:2006), which has been technically revised. The main changes compared with the previous edition are as follows:

— the definition for environmental communication objective (3.7) has been changed to be harmonized with definition of objective in ISO 14001:2015;

— references to social media have been included;

— Table A.1 has been updated to reflect revised standards.

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Introduction

In today's global economy, communication on environmental values, actions and performance has become an essential activity of organizations due to both increased public concern and interest, and governmental activities related to the environment. Organizations all over the world are increasingly confronted with the need to provide information to support policy positions and actions, and present and explain the environmental implications of their activities, products and services. There is also a growing need to listen to interested parties, and incorporate their views and requirements as part of environmental communication.

Organizations have a need to obtain and provide information about and respond to environmental issues, concerns and programmes. Furthermore, with the general availability of devices such as smart phones and tablets, communication is almost instantaneous, requiring the organization to be able to respond to any issue or information request in a timely manner. Information to be communicated is influenced by factors such as the organization's geographic location and distribution, size and types of activities. Motivations for communication include the following:

— the interest of the organization to share information on its environmental practices;

— a request for information by employees or investors, a government agency, a community group, a customer or supplier, or any other interested party;

— the need to discuss with interested parties, especially with target groups, a proposed action of the organization, such as expansion of an existing facility, or siting of a new facility, or the introduction of a new product or service;

— environmental risk management;

— compliance obligation requirements;

— response to suggestions (negative or positive) from interested parties;

— response to false and/or malicious accusations of environmental impropriety by parties intending to disparage the organization to promote their agendas;

— the increasing importance of addressing environmental issues.

Environmental communication is the process of sharing information to build trust, credibility and partnerships, to raise awareness, and to use in decision-making. The processes used and the content of environmental communication will vary with the objectives and circumstances of the organization and can be built on substantive information.

Environmental communication is broader than environmental reporting. It has many purposes and takes many forms. Environmental communication can be ad hoc or planned. An example of ad hoc communication occurs when a facility manager attends a community event and answers questions. Planned communication can cover a range from limited to full participation of interested parties, as follows.

a) One-way communication occurs when the organization distributes information, for example, when an organization issues an environmental report with no opportunity for questions or discussion.

b) Two-way communication occurs with an exchange of information and ideas among the organization and interested parties.

c) In participatory decision-making, including effective feedback that affects the organization and/or the local community, an organization collaborates with interested parties.

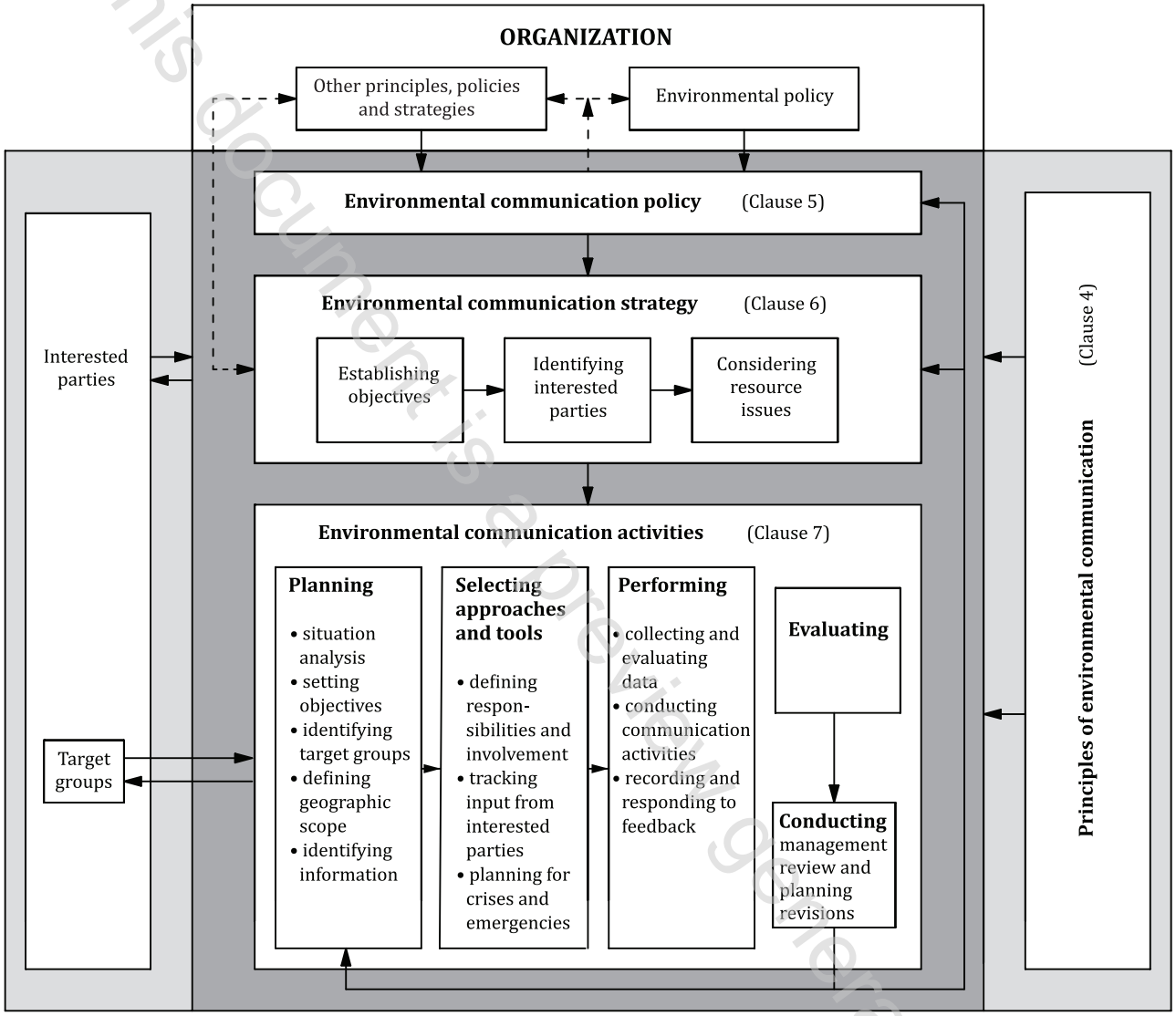
Engagement with interested parties provides an opportunity for an organization to learn their issues and concerns. It can lead to knowledge being gained by both sides and can influence opinions and perceptions. When properly done, any particular approach can be successful and satisfy the needs of the organization and interested parties. Understanding the communication pattern/behaviour of

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each interested party (or target group) can be important in environmental communications. The most effective environmental communication process involves ongoing contact by the organization with internal and external interested parties, as part of the organization's overall communications strategy.

Figure 1 shows the interrelationships and flow of environmental communication.



NOTE 1 Titles in bold and numbered refer to the clauses in this document.

NOTE 2 Dotted line arrows indicate the environmental communication system relationship with other elements of the organization. Full arrows indicate the interrelationship within the environmental communication system.

NOTE 3 Shading indicates the scope of the environmental communication system. Darker shading indicates the overlap of the environmental communication system with the organization.

Figure 1 — Environmental communication

Environmental communication often results in many benefits, such as:

— assisting interested parties in understanding an organization's environmental commitments, policies and performance;

— providing inputs/suggestions for improving the environmental performance of an organization's activities, products and services, and progress toward sustainability;

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— improving understanding of interested parties' needs and concerns to foster trust and dialogue;

— promoting an organization's environmental credentials, achievements and performance;

— raising the importance and level of environmental awareness to support an environmentally responsible culture and values within the organization;

— addressing interested parties' concerns and complaints about operational and emergency environmental hazards;

— enhancing interested parties' perceptions of the organization;

— increasing business support and shareholder confidence.

Environmental communication is one of the crucial issues to be dealt with by any organization, with or without an environmental management system in place. Environmental communication is more than a question of organization and management, it relates to the organization's values as well. To ensure successful communication processes, it is important for the organization to consider itself a responsible partner within society and to address the environmental expectations of interested parties.

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Environmental management — Environmental communication — Guidelines and examples

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1 Scope

This document gives guidelines to organizations for general principles, policy, strategy and activities relating to both internal and external environmental communication. It uses proven and well-established approaches for communication, adapted to the specific conditions that exist in environmental communication.

It is applicable to all organizations regardless of their size, type, location, structure, activities, products and services, and whether or not they have an environmental management system in place.

It can be used in combination with any of the ISO 14000 family of standards, or on its own.

NOTE 1 A reference table to the ISO 14000 family is provided in Annex A.

NOTE 2 ISO 14020, ISO 14021, ISO 14024, ISO 14025 and ISO 14026 provide specific environmental communication tools and guidance relating to product labels and declarations.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

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
environmental communication
process that an *organization* (3.4) conducts to provide and obtain information, and to engage in dialogue with internal and external *interested parties* (3.5) to encourage a shared understanding on environmental issues, aspects and performance

3.2
environmental communication policy
overall intentions and directions of an *organization* (3.4) related to its *environmental communication* (3.1) as formally expressed by top management

Note 1 to entry: The environmental communication policy can be a separate policy or part of other policies within the organization.

3.3
environmental communication strategy
organization's (3.4) framework for implementing its *environmental communication policy* (3.2) and for the setting of *environmental communication objectives* (3.7)

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