

Standardising Social Responsibility:

Analysing ISO representation issues from an SME perspective

EURAS Workshop, University of Skövde, Sweden, 16–18 June 2008

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Background (1)

- ISO's procedural core
 - consensus in drafting and arriving at national vote
 - voting by ISO's national members
 - balance of stakeholder interests at the national level
- Why?
 - Voluntary standards > support
 - Mirror parliament. process > government reference to standards

Background (2)

- Absence of political minorities
- ISO 26000 on Social Responsibility
 - Very inclusive
 - Stakeholders: Consumers, Government, Industry, Labour, NGO, and Other

Question

- *Which problems of representation do SMEs encounter in ISO 26000?*
- NORMAPME's fear

Theoretical framework (1)

- Political theory
 - Political representation
 - Gender studies

Theoretical framework (2)

- Democracy
 - Direct
 - Representative (“new layer of the privileged few”)
- Democratic deficit
 - Minority interests as ‘additional interests’
 - Classification problem

Theoretical framework (3)

- Act for - stand for
 - Problem of 'acting for'
 - Politics of presence
 - Imbalance of a mix
- Shift in view on minorities from group representation to individualization

Friction in ISO standardization

- Drafting: individuals, personal capacity
- Voting in two steps
 - National vote based on consensus: **balance of interests**
 - ISO: 1 country, 1 vote
- Absence of minorities on national level > no fall-back option for international imbalance

ISO 26000

Content: Certification

- De-politicizing process by excluding certification
- Politicizing process by strengthening representation

Process: Guide on stakeholder categories

- Balance of experts from categories at WG level
- Categories reflect mix of 'standing for' and 'acting for'

Industry interests

Shared interests SMEs & multi-nationals?

- SMEs have a different way of working

SME aims

- Acknowledge different SME interests/ category
- Exempt from heavy admin
- Emphasise selective application based on usefulness

Misuse categories

Some stakeholder categories ambiguous

- “Other” & “Industry” categories offer loophole for commercial parties

Asymmetry in representation

- Individuals negotiate, whether they represent only themselves or 11.000.000 SMEs

Conclusions

- Formal standardisation
 - Mix of direct & representative democracy
 - Mix of 'standing for' and 'acting for'
 - Schism between drafting & voting
- Inconsistency makes ISO vulnerable to
 - Misuse (hijacking)
 - Injustice (1: 11 million)

Recommendations

- ISO 26000 Guide
 - Differentiate among Industry & recognize SMEs
 - Address misuse categories by stricter definition
- Rethink ISO's democratic rationale
 - Lack national balance of interests
 - Voluntariness of standards: certification threat