

## **Buyer beware - ISO 20400 is not certifiable.**

This is an open communication from members of the [ISO20400.org Steering Group](https://www.iso20400.org). We are an independent group of experts in sustainable procurement from 18 different countries. We have supported the knowledge sharing platform [www.iso20400.org](https://www.iso20400.org) since publication of the standard in 2017 and many of us were part of the committee developing the standard in the period 2013-17.

[ISO20400.org](https://www.iso20400.org) is a not-for-profit initiative borne out of the ISO20400 committee. We offer a free knowledge sharing platform related to sustainable procurement. We don't sell, we don't buy, we don't advertise.

It was always intended to create a **guidance** standard, not a certifiable requirements standard. ISO 20400 provides guidance to users. It is neither intended nor appropriate for certification purposes. Any offer to certify to ISO 20400 or any claim to be certified to ISO 20400 would be a misrepresentation of the intent and purpose of this International Standard.

The standard enables users to adapt the guidance to the context of their organisation and their supply chain. Guidance standards are not subject to a formal pass/fail audit, or a certificate of conformity, as it is not accompanied with an accreditation standard that specifies how such certification can be carried out by a certification body. It is, as for all types of documents, feasible to have an independent evaluation against the standard and recommendations for closer alignment. This is not the same as ISO certification. We believe evaluation or assessment is more effective as the organisation being evaluated is more likely to openly share their challenges.

Some more general evaluations may very well incorporate the guidance in ISO 20400, such as the French label Relations Fournisseurs et Achats Responsables and ESG evaluations such as GRESB. These are appropriate and useful but do not constitute a certificate against ISO 20400.

Since the standard was published, we have seen examples of ill-informed organisations seeking certification and even demanding ISO 20400 certification from their suppliers. Equally, we have seen unscrupulous businesses offering certificates of conformity. ISO and its national members advise organisations to desist but in reality this practice is very hard to police.

This open communication is a **“Buyer beware”**: please do not accept offers to certify your practice against the standard or ask your suppliers to do so.

We thank you for your attention and wish you well in your sustainable procurement journey.

Regards

**The ISO20400.org Steering Group**

