

V Credibility

18 Balance of Issues

Does the report give a balanced picture of the organization and its significant environmental aspects?

Score

- 0 No mention or very insufficient / very little
- 1 Some / little /partial mention or coverage
- 2 Most important aspects covered, average
- 3 Better than average, current state-of-the-art practice of several leading reporters
- 4 Pace-setting creative new approach, outstanding, best practice

Explanations, Characteristics and Examples

The issues that are covered by the report are in **balance** with respect to the key stakeholders (report target audience) and identified significant aspects.

Examples:

- Describe how the significant reported aspects are managed, what the organization's performance within these aspects has been so far and what the future goals are.
- Identify the key stakeholder groups for the report and report on what these groups want to know and in a way that makes it easy for these groups to get access to the information.
- Areas of Balance between:
 - Challenges, unresolved issues and success stories.
 - Steps of the value chain and their relevance.
 - Various functions within the organization.
 - Management aspects and performance aspects.
 - Text/stories and data.
 - Good and bad stories, successes and challenges.
 - Content of the report and top management and editorial promises.

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19 Engagement with Stakeholders

Does the report describe the organization's engagement with its stakeholders and outcome of such relationships and communication / dialogue?

Score

- 0 No mention or very insufficient / very little
- 1 Some / little /partial mention or coverage
- 2 Most important aspects covered, average
- 3 Better than average, current state-of-the-art practice of several leading reporters
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Explanations, Characteristics and Examples

Approaches to **Engagement with Stakeholders** can be surveys, written communications, consultations, focus groups, community/advisory panels, web-based or other discussions, dialogue and involvement programs.

Stakeholder dialogue is a dedicated interaction with one, or a group of stakeholders on a particular subject, program or towards a particular goal of achieving understanding, consensus or progress.

Partnerships are close and continued co-operation between the organization and a dedicated partner.

Potentially relevant stakeholders are amongst e.g. customers, suppliers, employees, other authorities, and public organizations public interest groups and non-governmental organizations.

Stakeholders' involvement in and influence on the reporting can be described.

Examples:

Ways to describe Stakeholder Engagement / Dialogue:

- Description of methods used.
- Including information on results of stakeholder engagements/ dialogue.
- Frequency and extent of contact and briefings.
- Awards received or given.
- Rationale for the selection and prioritization of engagements with various stakeholders.
- Listing membership and active involvement in organizations and their programs/projects.
- Nature and scale of involvement in initiatives and membership organizations.
- Participation and/or active contribution in initiatives (e.g. GRI).
- Local or international environmental organizations (e.g. the Marine Stewardship Council).

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19 Engagement with Stakeholders (continued)

- Stakeholders' involvement in developing the environmental reporting.

References:

- GRI Version 2000, Part C, Chapter 5, Subsection "Stakeholder Relationship".

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20 Assurance Services

Does the report include a verification statement of an independent third party (e.g. an auditor, consultant or external expert) that increases credibility of the information included in the report?

Score

- 0 No mention or very insufficient / very little
- 1 Some / little /partial mention or coverage
- 2 Most important aspects covered, average
- 3 Better than average, current state-of-the-art practice of several leading reporters
- 4 Pace-setting creative new approach, outstanding, best practice

Explanations, Characteristics and Examples

Verification of the report or part of the information provided in the report by an independent third party or other **Assurance Services** serve to increase the credibility of the report.

The report user's assessment of the credibility that **the verification statement** adds to the report is influenced by:

- The verifiers' integrity and knowledge about the issues included in the report.
- The scope of the verification and the procedures performed.
- Whether the verification statement is formulated in an unambiguous, clear and understandable way.
- The inclusion of guidance in the report on how to use and interpret the verification statement.

Examples:

Elements that can influence the integrity and knowledge of the verifier:

- Competence with regard to the issues covered by the verification.
- Independent of the reporting organization.
- Working according to a set of professional standards.
- Belong to a profession regulated by law.

Organizations providing assurance:

- Accounting organization.
- Experts in the area of sustainability or reporting.
- Academia personalities and/or experts.

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20 Assurance Services (continued)

Elements that can be included in the verification statement:

- Title and addressee.
- Description of the engagement and identification of the subject matter (including the engagement objective, the subject matter, and the time period covered).
- Statement to identify the responsible party and description of the verifier's responsibilities.
- Identification of the standards under which the engagement was conducted.
- Description of the scope of the verification.
- Description of the procedures performed.
- Identification of the criteria used. The statement identifies the criteria against which the subject matter was evaluated or measured so that readers can understand the basis for the verifier's conclusions.
- The verifier's conclusion, including any reservations or denial of a conclusion (includes information about the level of assurance provided).
- The date of the verifier's statement (informs the users that the verifier has considered all relevant effects up to that date).
- The name of the firm or the verifier and the place of issue of the statement (the name informs the readers of the individual or firm assuming responsibility for the engagement).

References:

- GRI Version 2000, Part A, Section 8: "Verification of GRI Reports" and Annex 3: "Guidance on Verification".