



International  
Trade  
Centre

## MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND IMPLEMENTATION FOLLOW-UP

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# ITC Standards Map Database Evaluation

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### Management Response, Action Plan, Results, and Means of Verification

<b>Responsible manager:</b>	Joseph Wozniak, Head, T4SD (GIVC), Mathieu Lamolle, Senior Advisor, T4SD (GIVC)
<b>Responsible chief:</b>	Vanessa Erogbogbo, Chief, GIVC
<b>Responsible director:</b>	Dorothy Tembo, Acting Director, DSIT
<b>Head IEU:</b>	Miguel Jiménez Pont, ITC Independent Evaluation Unit

## Evaluation Team Note on Implementation<sup>1</sup>:

“The evaluators had limited knowledge about the organizational structure, size, and budget of the ITC Team. Hence, they could not provide detailed insights into how the recommendations could be implemented within ITC. Nonetheless, the table below (Table 10 from the report) attempts to provide a very rough overview of the estimated workload necessary to execute the evaluation recommendations.

*Estimation of workload for implementation of recommendations*

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Priority (A/B)</b>	<b>Expected workload (expert days)</b>
Comprehensiveness	Do not add additional criteria	-	-
Uniqueness of criteria	Rationalize DET (control for overlaps)	A	25
Inter-coder reliability	Harmonize data reporting / check missing values	B	10
Accuracy/Consistency	Enhance clarity of criteria/guidance/descriptions	A-	25
Accuracy/Consistency	Improve web links		10
Timeliness	Assess a timeframe of 2 years	B	3
Transparency	Include additional information	B	5
Due Diligence	Organize and implement changes to the DET	A	35 (ongoing)
<b>Total</b>			<b>113</b>

As evident from this table, the workload is significant, and, based on all indications, it will be challenging to execute the recommendations with the current personnel and resources in the ITC core team. At this point, it would be advisable for senior management to further calculate the costs for these crucial next development steps of the ITC Standards Map and then seek additional funding to implement these changes. In doing so, we prioritized the individual items as A and B recommendations.

The evaluation highlights that there is no alternative database that could replace the services of the ITC Standards Map, and many stakeholders and users depend on the high-quality processed data. Furthermore, recognizing the high expectations placed on the ITC Standards Map and the current dynamic changes in the standard landscape, we recommend additional funding for the database to meet evolving requirements.”

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from the evaluation report, page 38.

**Due Diligence and Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS):** The emergence of Due Diligence frameworks and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) risk regulations is likely to prompt substantial institutional developments as VSS seek to adapt their standards catalogues to these increasingly predominant regulatory tools. In fact, such developments are already underway. The key task in the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the current Data Entry Tool (DET) of the ITC Standards Map encompasses these developments and where modifications are necessary to align with the evolving institutional landscape of VSS. The evaluation identified five informational gaps, and for each of these, it developed recommendations (Nos. 1 to 5) on how to address and close them.

Recommendation No. 1: Due Diligence and VSS					
<p><b>Align the credibility criteria in ITC Standards Map (SM) with the updated ISEAL credibility principles.</b></p> <p>The evaluation team gathered from the stakeholder interviews that the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance (ISEAL) is presently organizing a thorough process to outline a renewed set of credibility criteria, considering new due diligence requirements. It is recommended to collaborate with ISEAL to incorporate the results of this process into the ITC Standards Map.</p> <p><i>Assigned to: ITC Standards Map Team</i></p>					
<b>Management Response and Justification:</b>					
<p>The recommendation is:</p> <p>Accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Partially accepted: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rejected: <input type="checkbox"/></p>		<p>The ITC Standards Map team has already initiated this process.</p>			
<b>Action Plan and Responsibilities:</b>					
Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing* partner(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks

1.1 T4SD database technical work to address recommendation	Credibility criteria in SM updated and validated by the SM Technical Working Group (TWG)	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.23	N/A
1.2 Initiate communication with ISEAL to express interest in collaborating and aligning the ITC Standards Map with the updated credibility principles. Obtain information on the timeline, key stakeholders involved, and the expected outcomes of the process to outline a renewed set of credibility criteria	Engagement with ISEAL and key contacts within ISEAL who are involved in the process of outlining the renewed set of credibility criteria are identified.	T4SD team		31.6.24	N/A
1.3 Work closely with ISEAL to align the ITC Standards Map with the updated credibility principles. Ensure that there is a clear understanding of the changes and how they impact the existing criteria in the ITC Standards Map	Coordination with ISEAL	T4SD team		ongoing	N/A
1.4 Inform relevant stakeholders, both within the organization and externally, about the alignment of the ITC Standards Map with the updated ISEAL credibility principles	Changes are communicated to stakeholders	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.24	N/A

**Recommendation No. 2: Due diligence and VSS****Add criterion on geospatial data, including polygons of plots.**

Risk analysis is central to the due diligence process, and legislators will more precisely regulate the data they accept as adequate proof of due diligence. Consequently, the ITC Standards Map should incorporate a criterion documenting the potential data requirements for risk analysis as stipulated by VSS systems. Of particular significance, the new EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) mandates businesses to integrate geospatial data, including polygons of plots, from their sourcing locations into their risk analysis. We therefore recommend a criterion on this aspect in Section B of the Data Entry Tool (DET).

**Assigned to:** ITC Standards Map Team

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:

Accepted:

Partially accepted:

Rejected:

**Action Plan and Responsibilities:**

Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing* partner(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
2.1 T4SD database technical work to address recommendation	Criteria on geospatial data added to the T4SD database and validated by the TWG	T4SD team	TWG, technical traceability and deforestation expert(s)	31.12.24	N/A
2.2 Assess the existing structure and criteria in Section B of the Standards	Review of current Standards Map DET regarding inclusion of geospatial data	T4SD team	TWG, technical traceability and	31.12.24	N/A

Map DET to understand how geospatial data can be seamlessly integrated			deforestation expert(s)		
2.3 Clearly define the criterion related to geospatial data and polygons of plots. Specify the required information and standards based on the EU Deforestation Regulation and other relevant VSS systems	Criterion is defined	T4SD team	TWG, technical traceability and deforestation expert(s)	31.12.24	N/A
2.4 Amend the Standards Map DET documentation to incorporate the new criterion. Clearly articulate the requirements, guidelines, and any specific instructions related to the inclusion of geospatial data and polygons of plots in risk analysis	Documentation updated	T4SD team		31.12.24	N/A
2.5 Communicate the addition of the new criterion to all relevant stakeholders, explaining the rationale behind the update, its importance in meeting regulatory requirements, and any deadlines for compliance	Changes communicated with relevant stakeholders	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.24	N/A

**Recommendation No. 3: Due diligence and VSS****Add criterion on extending due diligence requirements for up-stream value chain partners.**

If VSS requires certified producers or traders to ensure that their suppliers also adhere to the principles of responsible business conduct, the reach of due diligence regulations extends to non-certified producers, significantly expanding the effectiveness of certification in this area. The evaluation team believes that it is important to document this aspect in the ITC Standards Map in the section on Sustainable Management.

**Assigned to:** ITC Standards Map Team

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:

Accepted:

Partially accepted:

Rejected:

**Action Plan and Responsibilities:**

Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing* partner(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
3.1 T4SD database technical work to address recommendation	Criteria on due diligence added to the T4SD database and validated by the TWG	T4SD team	TWG, external expert(s)	31.12.24	N/A
3.2 Examine the current due diligence requirements and criteria within the ITC Standards Map and related	Existing standards and policies reviewed	T4SD team	TWG, external expert(s)	31.12.24	N/A

documentation. Identify any gaps or areas where extending due diligence requirements for upstream value chain partners could be beneficial					
3.3 Clearly define the criterion for extending due diligence requirements. Specify the expectations for certified producers or traders to ensure their suppliers adhere to responsible business conduct principles	Criterion for extending due diligence requirements defined	T4SD team	TWG, external expert(s)	31.12.24	N/A
3.4 Prepare detailed documentation explaining the new criterion. Clearly articulate the rationale behind the extension of due diligence requirements and how it enhances the effectiveness of certification. Add the new criterion to the appropriate section of the ITC Standards Map, specifically in the Sustainable Management section. Ensure that the integration is seamless and aligns with the existing	Documentation explaining the new criterion and is integrated into ITC Standards Map	T4SD team	TWG, external expert(s)	31.12.24	N/A

structure and format of the standards map					
3.5 Communicate the changes to relevant stakeholders, including certified producers, traders, and other entities affected by the extended due diligence requirements. Include information about the extended due diligence requirements in relevant reports and documentation. Emphasize transparency in how the criteria are applied and the impact they have on sustainable management	Changes are communicated with clear guidance on how to comply with the new criterion and any additional expectations are provided	T4SD team	TWG, external expert(s)	31.12.24	N/A
3.6 Establish a monitoring mechanism to track compliance with the extended due diligence requirements. Periodically review and update the extended due diligence requirements based on feedback, changes in the industry, or emerging best practices	Monitoring mechanism to track compliance	T4SD team		31.12.24	N/A

**Recommendation No. 4: Due diligence and VSS:****Add criterion covering the aspect of integration of responsible human rights business conduct into business models and strategies.**

Similar to the last point, the evaluation analyses revealed that, from the perspective of new sustainability reporting and due diligence initiatives, it is becoming increasingly significant to establish the principles of sustainable corporate governance at the strategic business level. For example, this could involve compensating managers not only for achieving financial goals but also for human rights objectives. If VSS also requires the integration of human rights goals into business strategies, the ITC Standards Map should be capable of documenting these developments.

**Assigned to:** ITC Standards Map Team

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:

Accepted:

Partially accepted:

Rejected:

**Action Plan and Responsibilities:**

Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing* partner(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
4.1 T4SD database technical work to address recommendation	Criteria added to the T4SD database covering the aspect of integration of responsible human rights business conduct into business models	T4SD team	TWG and external expert(s)	31.12.24	N/A
4.2 Review existing sustainability standards,	Assessment of existing standards and guidelines related to human rights	T4SD team		31.12.24	N/A

frameworks, and guidelines to identify gaps related to the integration of responsible human rights business conduct into business models and strategies. Assess whether VSS already incorporate such criteria	business conduct into business models and strategies				
4.3 Clearly articulate the criterion for the integration of responsible human rights business conduct into business models and strategies. Specify metrics to measure success in achieving human rights objectives at the strategic business level	The criterion for the integration of responsible human rights business conduct is clearly defined	T4SD team	TWG and external expert(s)	31.12.24	N/A
4.4 Ensure that the proposed criterion aligns with existing sustainability standards and frameworks. If VSS already requires such integration, make sure the new criterion complements and enhances existing requirements rather than duplicating efforts	Criterion is aligned with existing standards	T4SD team		ongoing	N/A
4.5 Establish a monitoring system to track progress and performance related to the	Monitoring mechanism used to periodically review and assess the	T4SD team		ongoing	N/A

integration of human rights into business strategies. Foster a culture of continuous improvement, where feedback is welcomed, and adjustments are made based on evolving industry standards and best practices	effectiveness of the new criterion and make adjustments as needed				
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**Recommendation No. 5: Due diligence and VSS:**

**Add criteria on environmental, social and governance related due diligence processes.**

**A)** This recommendation concerns the most comprehensive potential expansion of the ITC Standards Map (see Table 4 in the evaluation report). Current legislation in the EU drives due diligence requirements beyond the area of human rights to a broad set of ESG risks. To cover this development, it might become advisable to incorporate additional criteria into the DET. One challenge is that the entire environment of the global value chain regulation is currently in flux and highly volatile. Neither is it clear from the legal perspective what roles VSS are allowed to play within Due Diligence and ESG risk regulations, nor is it clear to what extent VSS will go down this road to adapt their standard catalogues and certification practices to the new regulations. Implementing the suggested changes in Table 4 entails a highly significant investment for the ITC Standards Map in terms of both workload and financial funding. Therefore, the evaluation team advises a gradual adaptation based on thorough assessments to determine the extent to which the inclusion of additional criteria into the DET will indeed be pivotal to ensuring the relevance of this database. Note that for each criterion, the respective guidance and descriptions need to be developed first before they are applied to a large sample of VSS.

**B)** Given that the central aim of the ITC Standards is to bring transparency to the world of standards, it might be a good idea to first organize an (online) survey among the VSS in the database. This would help to find out the specific ways in which they are currently planning to adapt their requirements and audit procedures to the due diligence and ESG risk regulations. The results of this survey could be further discussed and evaluated in the stakeholder process that has already commenced on this issue. Based on the survey results and additional insights from expert discussions, a clearer decision can be made about how exactly the gaps that we identified in this evaluation need to be closed. Furthermore, before considering any substantial alterations to the DET, we also advise closely monitoring ongoing legal developments. Adjustments to the database should only be made under the condition that the existing proposals on due diligence and ESG reporting materialize into actual EU laws

**Assigned to:** ITC Standards Map Team

**Management Response and Justification:**

The recommendation is:

Accepted:

Partially accepted:

Rejected:

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<b>Action Plan and Responsibilities:</b>					
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Expected result and means of verification</b>	<b>Responsible office or partner</b>	<b>Contributing* partner(s)</b>	<b>Implementation deadline</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
5.1 T4SD database technical work to address recommendation	Criteria added to the T4SD database on environmental, social and governance related due diligence processes	T4SD team	TWG and external expert(s)	31.12.24	N/A
5.2 Conduct an assessment of the current state of the ITC Standards Map and its alignment with EU legislation and global trends in ESG due diligence. Identify gaps in the existing criteria and standards that need to be addressed to cover a broad set of ESG risks	Comprehensive assessment of the current state of the ITC Standards Map and its alignment with EU legislation and due diligence	T4SD team	TWG and external expert(s)	31.12.23	This will be reviewed again in light of existing situation with passage of legislation in EU member states.
5.3 Conduct analysis to understand the evolving global value chain regulations and the roles that VSS are allowed to play within due diligence and ESG risk regulations	Analysis and compliance check to ensure that any proposed changes align with current or anticipated legal requirements	T4SD team	TWG and external expert(s)	31.07.25	
5.4 Work on developing new criteria related to environmental, social, and governance aspects that need to be included in the ITC	Additional criteria and guidance developed to provide clear guidance and descriptions for each new criterion to ensure understanding and consistent application.	T4SD team	TWG and external expert(s)	ongoing	

Standards Map's Due Diligence and ESG Toolkit (DET)					
5.5 Develop a comprehensive survey that covers various aspects of how VSS in the database plan to adapt to due diligence and ESG risk regulations. Ensure the survey is clear, concise, and covers relevant areas	Survey designed and launched	T4SD team	TWG and external expert(s)	TBD	Depends on budget availability – could be pushed to 2025
5.6 Communicate the purpose of the survey to stakeholders, emphasizing the importance of their input in shaping future decisions. Encourage active participation from VSS representatives and other stakeholders involved in the standards	Stakeholder engagement in the survey process	T4SD team	TWG and external expert(s)	TBD	Depends on budget availability – could be pushed to 2025
5.7 Collect and analyze survey responses to identify common trends, challenges, and potential solutions. Summarize key findings and create a report detailing the current status of VSS adaptation to due diligence and ESG regulations	Report produced based on survey analysis, including key findings related to VSS adaptation to due diligence and ESG regulations	T4SD team	TWG and external expert(s)	TBD	Depends on budget availability – could be pushed to 2025

<p>5.8 Based on survey results and stakeholder discussions, facilitate a decision-making process to determine the necessary actions to close the identified gaps. Develop a roadmap or action plan for implementing changes to the ITC Standards Map</p>	<p>Development of an action plan to implement changes</p>	<p>T4SD team</p>	<p>TWG and external expert(s)</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Depends on budget availability – could be pushed to 2025</p>
<p>5.9 Establish clear conditions for making adjustments to the database, emphasizing that changes should align with finalized EU laws on due diligence and ESG reporting. Ensure that the proposed alterations adhere to legal requirements and standards</p>	<p>Standards Map adjusted accordingly</p>	<p>T4SD team</p>	<p>TWG and external expert(s)</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Depends on budget availability – could be pushed to 2025</p>
<p>5.10 Document the entire process, including survey results, stakeholder discussions, expert consultations, and decisions made. Communicate the outcomes and proposed actions to relevant stakeholders, ensuring transparency in the decision-making process</p>	<p>Documentation and communication</p>	<p>T4SD team</p>	<p>TWG and external expert(s)</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Depends on budget availability – could be pushed to 2025</p>

<p>5.11 Establish mechanisms for continuous monitoring and assessment of the implemented changes. Periodically collect feedback from users and stakeholders to make adjustments as needed</p>	<p>Monitoring mechanisms established</p>	<p>T4SD team</p>	<p>TWG and external expert(s)</p>	<p>TBD</p>	<p>Depends on budget availability – could be pushed to 2025</p>
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### Uniqueness of Criteria:

The ITC Standards Map is a database that assesses and documents a large amount of text-based qualitative data, ensuring that criteria are clear and do not overlap. If these criteria are unclear, the information about VSS produced may become redundant or ambiguous. The ITC team has successfully defined a comprehensive set of criteria, but the quality of these criteria and their descriptions may vary across different sections of the DET. The evaluation found that while no duplications can be identified in a direct comparison of criteria, some descriptions and guidance for individual criteria may overlap, resulting in partially similar information about VSS. This presents a complex analytical task to precisely define the scope of information addressed by each criterion within a group of criteria on the same topic. The evaluation found that a thematic section of DET may combine various criteria with a broader focus with various criteria with a narrower focus, potentially leading to redundant information. Although the information generated is not incorrect or faulty, it may become inefficiently organized.

<b>Recommendation No. 6: Uniqueness of criteria:</b>	
<b>Commission of a consultant to identify areas where overlapping criteria can be consolidated without compromising the system.</b>	
Considering that the ITC Standards Map already utilizes an extensive system of 1600+ criteria and anticipating further expansion to encompass vital developments such as Due Diligence and ESG Risk regulations, it is recommended to commission a consultant. The objective would be to identify areas where overlapping criteria can be consolidated without compromising the key strength of the ITC Standards Map as the most comprehensive data repository on VSS. While the evaluation focused on a limited section of the entire database, the preliminary findings suggest that it may be possible to reduce the number of criteria by 20% to 25%. This reduction would also create space to adapt the DET to address new challenges.	
<b>Assigned to:</b> <i>ITC Management and the Standards Map Team</i>	
<b>Management Response and Justification:</b>	
The recommendation is:	Looking forward to potential support from SECO – e.g. direct contracting of consultancy to implement this recommendation.
Accepted: <input type="checkbox"/>	
Partially accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Rejected: <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>Action Plan and Responsibilities:</b>					
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Expected result and means of verification</b>	<b>Responsible office or partner</b>	<b>Contributing* partner(s)</b>	<b>Implementation deadline</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
6.1 Clearly define the objectives of the consultancy, emphasizing the need to identify and consolidate overlapping criteria without compromising the comprehensiveness of the ITC Standards Map. Clearly outline the scope of the consultancy, specifying the sections or criteria groups within the DET that should be analyzed	Consultancy objectives and scope defined	T4SD team	TWG and recruited consultant	TBD in 2025	Planned for 2025 given budgetary constraints
6.2 Research and select a consultancy firm with expertise in standards mapping, data organization, and analysis. Ensure the selected firm has experience working with large datasets and qualitative data	Consultant or Consultancy firm selected	T4SD team	TWG and recruited consultant	TBD in 2025	Planned for 2025 given budgetary constraints
6.3 Initiate the process of hiring a consultant with the necessary expertise and	Consultant or Consultancy firm hired	T4SD team	TWG and recruited consultant	TBD in 2025	Planned for 2025 given budgetary constraints

experience in standards mapping and data consolidation. Develop a clear contract outlining the scope of work, deliverables, and timelines					
6.4 Share the findings from the evaluation, emphasizing the potential for a 20% to 25% reduction in criteria. Provide access to the relevant sections of the ITC Standards Map and any additional documentation that might aid the consultancy in understanding the current structure and criteria descriptions	Background information provided	T4SD team	TWG and recruited consultant	TBD in 2025	Planned for 2025 given budgetary constraints
6.5 Consultant or consultancy firm conducts a detailed analysis of the selected sections or criteria groups. Identify areas of overlap, redundancy, and opportunities for consolidation without compromising the essential information. Consultant or consultancy firm provides detailed documentation of their	In-depth analysis including recommendations	T4SD team	TWG and recruited consultant	TBD in 2025	Planned for 2025 given budgetary constraints

<p>findings, recommendations, and the rationale behind the proposed changes. This includes a plan for implementation and potential impacts on the usability and effectiveness of the ITC Standards Map.</p>					
<p>6.6 Implement the recommended changes to avoid disruptions. Monitor the impact on the efficiency and organization of the ITC Standards Map</p>	<p>Changes are implemented, and the impact of the reduced overlap is measured</p>	<p>T4SD team</p>	<p>TWG and recruited consultant</p>	<p>TBD in 2025</p>	<p>Planned for 2025 given budgetary constraints</p>

**Accuracy and Consistency:**

**Accuracy:** In these crucial data quality dimensions, we assessed the degree to which the data collection processes employed by the ITC Standards Map generate correct and consistent results. It was found for both evaluation criteria that this is the case for the large majority of data points that were analyzed. The quality of the data is typically accurate and consistent. The main issues that we found for a minor, albeit not insignificant, part of the data were that the extract provided by VSS organizations to justify the coverage of a particular criteria of the DET was in another document, or that the provided web links to the VSS documents were not correct in the sense that the link could not be opened, or opened a different document or webpage than the one mentioned.

Recommendation No. 7: Accuracy and Consistency:					
<p><b>Improve web links</b></p> <p>It is recommended to conduct additional quality control throughout the database to ensure that the weblinks are correct. These links are crucial, especially for stakeholders who use the ITC Standards Map as a starting point for further analysis.</p> <p><i>Assigned to: ITC Standards Map team</i></p>					
Management Response and Justification:					
<p>The recommendation is:</p> <p>Accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Partially accepted: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rejected: <input type="checkbox"/></p>					
Action Plan and Responsibilities:					
Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing* partner(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks

7.1 T4SD database technical work to address recommendation	Documentation (online) provided that enhances clarity on the T4SD database	T4SD team	TWG	31.03.25	N/A
7.2 Create a comprehensive list of data points that have incorrect or inaccessible links. Categorize the issues based on whether the extract is in another document, whether the link cannot be opened, or whether it opens a different document or webpage	Affected data points are identified	T4SD team	TWG	31.03.25	N/A
7.3 Examine the current data collection processes to understand how links are added to the database. Identify potential points of failure in the process that lead to incorrect or inaccessible links	Existing processes are reviewed	T4SD team	TWG	31.03.25	N/A
7.4 Establish a set of quality control procedures specifically focusing on verifying and validating links. Define criteria for correct links, including document content validation and accessibility	Quality control procedures developed	T4SD team	TWG	31.03.25	N/A

<p>7.5 Assign a team or individuals to verify the links that could not be validated. Cross-check the information provided in the ITC Standards Map with the actual content of the linked documents.</p>	<p>Weblinks verified</p>	<p>T4SD team</p>	<p>TWG</p>	<p>31.03.25</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>7.6 Correct the links for the data points identified as having issues. Ensure that the database is updated with accurate and accessible links. Reach out to the relevant VSS organizations to address the issues found in their document extracts or links. Request updated or corrected information if necessary</p>	<p>Database entries updated</p>	<p>T4SD team</p>	<p>TWG</p>	<p>31.03.25</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>7.7 If applicable, inform users of the ITC Standards Map about the updates and improvements in link accuracy. Clearly communicate the actions taken to enhance the quality of the data</p>	<p>Users are notified</p>	<p>T4SD team</p>	<p>TWG</p>	<p>31.03.25</p>	<p>N/A</p>

**Consistency:** Another key aspect examined was the accuracy of the assessments made by the ITC Standards Map regarding whether a VSS fulfills specific criteria. In this context, it is important to note that these assessments involved a qualitative operation, and there will always be room for interpretation. Different stakeholders, with their diverse interests and perspectives, may nuance various solutions. Considering this, the evaluation again observed that the ITC Standards Map attained a high level of accuracy. However, the evaluation team also encountered some assessments that did not immediately align with their understanding of the underlying criteria. The evaluation assessed this finding as non-critical, and therefore, did not recommend undertaking a major systematic revision of the data aimed at correcting existing inaccuracies.

Recommendation No. 8: Accuracy and Consistency:					
<p><b>Enhance clarity of individual criteria descriptions and guidance.</b></p> <p>As a beneficial step in the process to consolidate and rationalize certain aspects of the DET as mentioned above, it would be useful to review and enhance the clarity of individual criteria descriptions and guidance. This would further improve and facilitate future data collection processes. <b>Assigned to:</b> ITC Standards Map team</p>					
Management Response and Justification:					
<p>The recommendation is:</p> <p>Accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Partially accepted: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rejected: <input type="checkbox"/></p>					
Action Plan and Responsibilities:					
Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing* partner(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
8.1 Identify the specific criteria that were highlighted as having potential clarity issues.	Comprehensive list created to guide the review process	T4SD team	TWG	31.03.25	N/A

Create a comprehensive list to guide the review process					
8.2 Conduct a detailed review of the criteria descriptions for each identified element. Identify ambiguous language, potential sources of confusion, or areas open to interpretation	A review of existing criteria descriptions that identify ambiguous language and potential sources of confusion isare identified	T4SD team	TWG	31.03.25	N/A
8.3 Revise the criteria descriptions to use clear and unambiguous language. Provide explicit definitions for terms that might be subject to interpretation. Ensure consistency in the terminology used across the criteria	Language is clarified, and definitions are provided	T4SD team	TWG	31.03.25	N/A
8.4 Revise any existing documentation, manuals, or guides associated with the ITC Standards Map to reflect the updated criteria descriptions. Ensure that users have access to the latest information	Documentation and manuals are updated	T4SD team	TWG	31.03.25	N/A

**Inter-coder Reliability:** Inter-coder reliability refers to the consistency in applying criteria in the ITC Standards Map among experts, ensuring no bias in data collection and classification. The evaluation found no systematic biases in the application of criteria by different experts. Interviewed stakeholders rated this aspect relatively high, assigning it a score of 3.4 out of 5 points. Technical inconsistencies were identified in the current data reporting format. Although the data protocol's structure prevents empty fields, rare instances occur. Additionally, data points not applicable to a specific VSS were documented in different formats by different experts across VSS. The ITC Standards Map's rich and valuable data presents opportunities for further analysis by stakeholders, researchers, and the ITC itself. To fully capitalize on these opportunities, harmonizing aspects across the data and tightening guidance documents on reporting on non-applicable data points could be considered for future assessments. This approach does not significantly compromise the data's quality.

Recommendation No. 9: Harmonize data reporting / check missing values:	
<p>It is recommended that the technical staff carefully review the detailed findings outlined in the report regarding the harmonization of data reporting and checking for missing values. They should assess the possibility of implementing these corrections in a highly automated manner, such as by identifying and automatically replacing various formats with a harmonized one. Furthermore, the technical team should identify all empty fields, and the broader team should investigate the reasons for these missing values and make corrections if necessary. If ITC management comes to the conclusion that these tasks should not be put on top of the existing workload, it is advised to use a limited, highly defined technical consultancy to fix these points.</p> <p><b>Assigned to:</b> <i>ITC Management and the Standards Map Team</i></p>	
Management Response and Justification:	
<p>The recommendation is:</p> <p>Accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Partially accepted: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rejected: <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
Action Plan and Responsibilities:	

Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing* partner(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
9.1 The technical staff thoroughly reviews the detailed findings outlined in the evaluation report related to data harmonization and missing values to understand the nature of technical inconsistencies in the current data reporting format	A detailed review by technical staff provides a clear understanding of the nature of any technical inconsistencies in the data reporting format	T4SD team	TWG	30.06.25	N/A
9.2 Assess the feasibility of implementing corrections in a highly automated manner. This may involve identifying tools or methods to replace various data formats with a harmonized one automatically. Potential impacts on existing systems and processes will also be taken into consideration	Feasibility study assessing if corrections can be automated	T4SD team	TWG	30.06.25	N/A
9.3 Strengthen the guidance documents related to reporting on not-covered and non-applicable data points	Guidance documentation enhanced and clearly define and communicate the expected format for documenting these data points to ensure consistency among experts	T4SD team	TWG	30.63.25	N/A

9.4 Develop automated tools to identify all empty fields in the data, investigate the reasons for the missing values, and make corrections as necessary	Empty field analysis and missing values are corrected with the use of a process or a tool to detect and flag these missing values automatically	T4SD team	TWG	39.06.25	N/A
9.5 Conduct a thorough evaluation of the resources required to implement the recommended changes and include a clear understanding of the potential benefits and efficiencies gained from the corrections	Assessment of impact on existing workload	T4SD team	TWG	30.06.25	N/A
9.6 Engage in a dialogue with management to decide whether the corrective actions should be prioritized within the existing workload or if additional resources are required	Presentation to SMC of the detailed findings and proposed actions in order to consider external consultancy	T4SD team	TWG	30.03.25	N/A
9.7 If management decides that the tasks should not be added to the existing workload, explore the option of hiring a limited, highly defined technical consultancy. Clearly define the scope of work and expectations,	Terms of reference for external consultancy defined	T4SD team	TWG	30.06.25	N/A

ensuring that the consultancy is equipped to address the specific issues identified in the report					
9.8 Develop a detailed plan for implementing the proposed corrections, including timelines, responsibilities, and milestones. Communicate the plan to relevant stakeholders, including technical staff, data experts, and management	Implementation plan developed	T4SD team	TWG	30.06.25	N/A
9.9 Establish a monitoring system to track the progress of the corrections. Collect feedback from stakeholders throughout the process to ensure that the implemented changes align with their needs and expectations	Monitoring system established	T4SD team	TWG	30.06.25	N/A

**Timeliness:** The evaluation found that the data in the database is largely timely, aligning with the established two-year revision cycle per VSS. Approximately 30% of VSS covered by the ITC Standards Map have updated their standards, but the database has not assessed these updates. In addition, in the evaluation, we found some differing time references between the information provided in the Standards Map back-end and the last update provided by the VSS on their websites. But here, according to ITC, an automated process has already been put in place that aligns this data.

Recommendation No. 10: Timeliness - Assess a timeframe of 2 years:					
<p>The evaluation recommends that it would be worthwhile for the ITC team to consider whether there are phases in standards development where a two-year coverage timeframe might be too broad.</p> <p><b>Assigned to:</b> <i>ITC Management and the Standards Map Team</i></p>					
Management Response and Justification:					
<p>The recommendation is:</p> <p>Accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Partially accepted: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rejected: <input type="checkbox"/></p>					
Action Plan and Responsibilities:					
Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing* partner(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks
10.1 Verify the findings of the analysis to ensure accuracy and confirm the 30% of VSS that have updated their	The number of VSS that have updated their standards but have not been assessed by the data base has been reviewed and confirmed	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task

standards but have not been assessed by the database					
10.2 Based on the results of the previous action, ensure that the database assesses the VSS that have updated their standards	The database assesses the VSS that have updated their standards	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task
10.3 Assess the current two-year revision cycle established by the ITC Standards Map for VSS to identify potential phases in standards development where a two-year timeframe might be too broad. Consider whether adjusting the revision cycle or introducing interim assessments could improve the database's accuracy	The two-year coverage timeframe is assessed	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task
10.4 Communicate with the VSS that have updated their standards but haven't been assessed. Encourage the timely submission of updated standards to the database. Collaborate with VSS to understand their revision timelines and gather information on any specific	The database is updated as a result of coordination with VSS	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task

challenges they face in aligning with the two-year cycle					
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**Transparency:** The transparency of the ITC Standards Map, and especially the openness and willingness to cooperate on the part of the ITC team has been highlighted as a key asset of the ITC Standards Map. Indeed, transparency is very high for stakeholders who directly engage with the team and delve into the data in detail. What's missing, however, is a detailed explanation of how the reviewing process is conducted and how decisions are made regarding whether or not a VSS meets a specific criterion. This is a crucial aspect that significantly affects the tool's reliability. While the ITC Standards Map is transparent to stakeholders and experts who work closely with the ITC Standards Map Team, there is room for improvement to enhance the transparency of this database for a broader audience, particularly those primarily using the front end of the database.

Recommendation No. 11: Transparency - Include additional information:					
<p>The evaluation recommends additional information in the methodology section for external users, including details on how standards are added to the map, the process of assessments, data entry and review, update frequency, and data neutrality. For outside users who primarily interact with the front end of the database, some additional information about the data collection process could be included. This regards, in particular, the following areas to be included in the methodology section: How to add standards to the map? How are the assessments performed? Who enters and reviews the data? How frequently is the data updated, and how neutral is the data?</p> <p><b>Assigned to:</b> <i>The Standards Map Team</i></p>					
Management Response and Justification:					
<p>The recommendation is:</p> <p>Accepted: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Partially accepted: <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Rejected: <input type="checkbox"/></p>					
Action Plan and Responsibilities:					
Actions	Expected result and means of verification	Responsible office or partner	Contributing* partner(s)	Implementation deadline	Remarks

11.1 Conduct a thorough review of the existing documentation, particularly the methodology section of the ITC Standards Map	Gaps and areas where additional information related to data collection processes is needed are identified	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task
11.2 Collaborate with internal and external stakeholders, including the ITC team, data contributors, and users, to gather insights on the data collection process	Collect feedback on what specific information users would find valuable for better understanding the methodology	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task
11.3 Clearly outline step-by-step procedures on how standards are added to the map. Include information on criteria, validation, and any required documentation	Detailed procedures are developed. The process for conducting assessments, specifying the criteria used, and how scoring is done, is documented	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task
11.4 Clearly define and communicate the roles of individuals involved in data entry and review	Roles and responsibilities are defined, which specify responsibilities for maintaining data quality and accuracy	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task
11.5 Clearly communicate how frequently the data on the ITC Standards Map is updated	Data update frequency is established and includes a schedule for regular updates and any triggers for ad-hoc updates	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task
11.10 Provide information on measures taken to ensure the neutrality of the data. This	Methods to ensure data neutrality are established	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task

may include detailing the validation process, conflict of interest policies, and any steps taken to minimize bias					
11.11 Integrate the additional information into the methodology section of the ITC Standards Map. Ensure that the language used is clear, concise, and accessible to a diverse audience, including those with limited technical knowledge	The methodology section of the ITC Standards Map is updated	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task
11.12 Update the front end of the database to include summaries or links to the detailed methodology section	Front-end user communication is improved to ensure that users accessing the database have easy access to information about the data collection process	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task
11.13 Implement user support mechanisms such as FAQs, tutorials, or user guides to help users navigate the database effectively and understand the data collection methodology	User support is provided through FAQs, tutorials, or user guides	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task
11.14 Updates and improvements made to the transparency of the ITC Standards Map are clearly	Changes are communicated	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task

communicated through the use of various communication channels, including the website, newsletters, and social media					
11.15 Encourage users to provide feedback on the new transparency features	Feedback is collected and used to make further improvements and address any additional concerns	T4SD team	TWG	31.12.25	This is a low priority task