



Barbara Strozziiaan 336  
1083 HN Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
[info@gssb.globalreporting.org](mailto:info@gssb.globalreporting.org)

## Item 17. Project Proposal Revision ‘Employee’/’Worker’ Terminology

### *Project Proposal*

<b>Meeting</b>	3-5 November 2015, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
<b>Project</b>	Revision ‘Employee’/’Worker’ Terminology
<b>Description</b>	The GSSB instructed the Standards Division to start the project to review of the ‘employee/worker’ terminology in the G4 Guidelines with the aim of including revised content in the Standards. This paper presents the project proposal.

This document has been prepared by the GRI Standards Division. It is provided as a convenience to observers at meetings of the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), to assist them in following the Board’s discussion. It does not represent an official position of the GSSB. Board positions are set out in the GRI Sustainability Reporting Standards. The GSSB is the independent standard-setting body of GRI. For more information visit [www.globalreporting.org](http://www.globalreporting.org).

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# 1 Project background

2 The GRI Standards should be aligned with international norms or standards that they reference or seek to be compatible with. These norms and standards  
3 usually use the term 'worker' rather than 'employee' to promote the concept that organizations consider their impacts and influence across their entire  
4 workforce. This includes importantly the ILO Conventions and other norms and standards like the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and ISO  
5 26000 on social responsibility.

6 It was flagged to the Standards Division that the current use of the terms 'worker' and 'employee' in the GRI Guidelines is inconsistent and not aligned with  
7 the ILO Conventions.

8 As a first examination, the Labor Constituency in the GRI Stakeholder Council undertook a thorough review of the G4 Guidelines Draft Version January  
9 2013 to identify instances where the term 'employee' should be replaced by the term 'worker'. The outcome of this exercise identified two levels of changes  
10 to the term 'employee'. There were some instances where replacing the term 'employee' with the term 'worker' does not have direct implications on the  
11 disclosure requirements; whereas in other instances it was acknowledged that, although such replacements should be made, they require disclosures to be  
12 rewritten.

13 In the context of the GRI Guidelines, the use of the terms 'employee' and 'worker', and any changes to this use, carry significant implications, since the  
14 quantitative data to be collected and reported for the Guidelines' disclosures may vary depending on which term is used and how the terms are defined.

## 15 Project objective

16 The main objective is to update the use of the terminology regarding 'employee'/'worker' in the GRI Standards and align it with the ILO Conventions as key  
17 reference. Other references, such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and ISO 26000 on social responsibility, will also be consulted where  
18 appropriate.

19 The Standards Division recommends that an ad hoc Technical Committee is appointed to advise on the best use of the terms 'employee' and 'worker' in the  
20 Sustainability Reporting Standards. In order to meet the goal to align the Guidelines' use of the terms 'worker' and 'employee' with international norms, it is  
21 key to ensure collaboration with respective international representatives.

22 The Standards Division proposes to partner with the ILO in this project, due to the authoritativeness and acceptance of the ILO Conventions as a key  
23 reference in this field. Accordingly, the ad hoc Technical Committee should include technical experts from the ILO.

24 The scope of the ad hoc Technical Committee's work is limited to the review of all instances of the use of 'worker', 'employee', synonyms of these or related  
25 terms (e.g., 'young worker').

## 26 Project planning

27 The project follows the Due Process Protocol. The project is overseen by the Due Process Oversight Committee (DPOC), which has the mandate to assess  
28 whether due process has been followed effectively by the GSSB in its standard-setting activities.

29 Project Commencement: The proposal to start a new project has been prepared by the Standards Division based on research and on appropriate consultation  
30 within the Global Sustainability Standards Board (GSSB), to be presented to the GSSB for approval, amendment or rejection. The draft project proposal is to  
31 be circulated to the GRI Board and GRI Stakeholder Council to identify matters of possible relevance to the project.

32 Appointment of ad hoc Technical Committee: The GSSB will appoint an ad hoc Technical Committee in a manner that brings the right balance of technical  
33 expertise to the topic discussion. The ad hoc Technical Committee will contain participants from the Labor Constituency in GRI's governance bodies and  
34 participants who are not members of GRI's governance bodies but who shall have experience relevant to the subject matter, preferably from the ILO.

35 Development of Recommendations: The ad hoc Technical Committee will collaborate online to carry out its work and develop advice on the use of the terms  
36 'employee' and 'worker'. The Standards Division will ensure that the recorded feedback on the use of the terms 'employee' and 'worker' received through  
37 previous public consultations and the technical examination of the use of the terminology by representatives of GRI Stakeholder Council's Labor Constituency  
38 will be shared with the ad hoc Technical Committee at the start of its work.

39 Public Exposure: Depending on the recommendations made by the Project Working Group, a public consultation might be appropriate. In that case an  
40 exposure draft will be posted for public consultation.

41 Consideration of Respondents' Comments on the Exposure Draft: Comments and suggestions received within the exposure period will be read and  
42 considered by the ad hoc Technical Committee and by the GSSB. The recommendations will be updated accordingly.

43 Depending on the nature of changes, the GSSB will consider if a re-exposure is needed.

44 Release of final Sustainability Reporting Standards (SRS): Subject to having received confirmation from the DPOC that in its opinion due process has been  
45 followed, the GSSB is to issue its SRS together with a separate document explaining the basis for its conclusions, including its consideration of and response  
46 to comments received on an exposure draft, to be posted to the GSSB website.  
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