

**!! Not for Submission !!**

The document below includes the *Word* version of the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board's (IAASB) and the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants' (IESBA) online joint survey.

It aims to facilitate *stakeholders' internal outreach or information-gathering activities, and drafting and review of responses prior to completing the online survey.*

Please provide your input by using the [online survey](#).

**About this Joint Stakeholder Survey**

This joint survey is the first step in the IAASB's and the IESBA's (together referred to as the Standard Setting Boards (SSBs)) process to develop their respective Strategies and Work Plans (SWPs) for 2028–2031. It seeks stakeholders' views on specific matters that will help inform the SSBs as they develop their respective Consultation Papers (targeted for the end of 2026) for their SWPs.

This survey was developed with a broad range of stakeholders in mind as the input from a diverse group of stakeholders will help the SSBs better understand the role of professional accountants in the environment and how the SSBs could best serve the public interest through their mission of developing high-quality international standards.

This survey is set out in the following sections – stakeholders are asked to respond to the questions included in sections I, III, IV and V, by **May 15, 2026**:

**Section I** — About the Respondent

**Section II** — Background

**Section III** — SSBs' Strategic Positioning for 2028–2031

**Section IV** — Key Trends Impacting the SSBs

**Section V** — Areas for Joint Action in SSBs' Work Plans

You may respond to all questions or matters for stakeholder input or only selected questions or matters.

All responses will be considered a matter of public record and submissions will ultimately be posted on the SSBs' websites.

## SECTION I: ABOUT THE RESPONDENT

### 1. From which perspective are you providing this feedback?

(a) A personal view

*[If (a) is selected]*

Your name:

Your organization (if applicable):

E-mail address:

(b) The view of an organization

*a professional body / Jurisdictional Standard Setter*

Organization: The Royal Netherlands Institute of Chartered Accountants

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### 2. Please select from the following options to which stakeholder group you or your organization belongs:

- Academia
- Accounting Firm
  - Global Accounting Firm
  - Large National or Regional Accounting Firm
  - Small- or Medium-Sized Accounting Firm
  - Sole Practitioner
- IFAC Member Body or Other Professional Accountancy or Professional Organization
  - **IFAC Member Body or Affiliate**
  - Other Professional Accountancy or Professional Organization
- International Organization – Please specify: [...]
- Jurisdictional Standard Setter (JSS) or Other Standard Setter
  - **JSS for both Auditing and Assurance, and Ethics**
  - JSS for Auditing and Assurance only
  - JSS for Ethics only
  - Other – Please specify: [...]
- Organization Other Than an Accounting Firm That Performs Sustainability Assurance Engagements
- Preparer or Issuer of Financial Statements or Other Financial or Non-Financial Information

- Public Sector Organization
- Regulator or Audit, Assurance or Ethics Oversight Body
- Those Charged with Governance
- User of Financial or Non-Financial Information (e.g., investor, analyst, lender or other creditor)
- Other – Please specify: [...]

**3. Please select from the following options the geographical region that best matches you or your organization**

- Africa
- Asia Pacific
- **Europe**
- South America
- Middle East
- North America
- Global *[this will not come up as an option if the respondent's view is a personal view]*

## SECTION II: BACKGROUND

### About IAASB and IESBA

The [International Foundation for Ethics and Audit](#) (IFEA) is a nonprofit organization that supports high-quality, international standard-setting in ethics, audit, and assurance in the public interest. IFEA fulfills its mission through its two standard-setting boards, the IAASB and the IESBA. The IAASB and the IESBA issue their standards independently, following an approved due process including consideration of the [Public Interest Framework](#). The [Public Interest Oversight Board](#) oversees IAASB and IESBA activities and the public interest responsiveness of their standards.

The **IAASB** serves the public interest by setting high-quality international standards for auditing, assurance, quality management, reviews and related services, and by facilitating the convergence of international and national standards. In doing so, the IAASB enhances the quality and uniformity of practice throughout the world and strengthens public confidence in the global auditing and assurance profession.

The **IESBA** serves the public interest by setting high-quality, international ethics (including independence) standards as a cornerstone to ethical behavior in business and organizations, and to public trust in financial and non-financial information that is fundamental to the proper functioning and sustainability of organizations, financial markets and economies worldwide.

### SSBs' SWPs 2024–2027

The SSBs maintain a practice of regular and open dialogue with all stakeholders to ensure the SSBs' standard-setting work remains responsive to stakeholder demands and market needs and continues to serve the public interest. Accordingly, each SSB is responsible for developing a comprehensive SWP for standards and related agenda priorities. The current SWPs for both the IAASB and IESBA conclude at the end of 2027.

For the 2024–2027 strategy period, each of the SSBs has identified four strategic objectives.<sup>1</sup> Strategic objectives reflect what each SSB is seeking to achieve during the strategy period, in support of their overarching goal or vision. The strategic objectives guide the selection and prioritization of standard-setting and related activities.

IAASB Strategic Objectives for Its Current Strategy Period, 2024–2027
Establish globally accepted standard(s) for assurance on sustainability reporting
Support the consistent performance of quality audit and review engagements by enhancing our standards in areas where there is the greatest public interest need
Strengthen coordination with IESBA and other leading standard setters and regulators to leverage better collective actions in the public interest
Create more agile, innovative ways of working in line with the Monitoring Group's reform vision

<sup>1</sup> In its 2024–2027 SWP, the IESBA used the term strategic themes instead of strategic objectives.

<b>IESBA Strategic Objectives for Its Current Strategy Period, 2024–2027</b>
Enhancing trust in sustainability reporting and assurance
Strengthening the IESBA Code of Ethics or responding in other ways in areas beyond sustainability reporting and assurance
Further enhancing the diversity of stakeholder perspectives and the global operability and acceptance of the IESBA's standards
Widening the influence of the IESBA's standards through a continued focus on adoption and implementation

### SECTION III: SSBs' STRATEGIC POSITIONING FOR 2028–2031

Through a rigorous and transparent due process, extensive stakeholder engagement, and evidence-based analysis, the SSBs work in connected and complementary ways. This collaboration ensures that their standards are responsive to the needs of their stakeholders, and helps to strengthen public trust and confidence in financial and non-financial reporting.

The SSBs' standards promote globally consistent practices that enable auditors and professional accountants in firms and other organizations to deliver their services or perform their activities with a clear focus on the public interest. These global standards help consistency of regulatory approaches. They enhance confidence in reported information for investors' and other users' capital allocation and other decision-making across jurisdictions. These standards therefore offer a critical contribution to economic growth, capital markets efficiency and integrity, and financial stability through enhanced trust and accountability.

#### Questions or Matters for Stakeholder Input

4. As the SSBs look toward the 2028–2031 period, they are reflecting on how to position their strategies and work plans to best serve the public interest within a rapidly changing global environment. This involves careful consideration of how the SSBs remain relevant, responsive, and impactful in their standard-setting and other related work. **In that context, what do you believe the SSBs should aspire to achieve during their next strategy period, 2028–2031?**

Your answer may touch on different dimensions, for example:

- The relevance, responsiveness and impact of the SSBs' standard-setting and related activities.
- Broader adoption and effective implementation of the SSBs' standards.
- The SSBs' interaction and engagement with key stakeholder groups.
- The SSBs' ability to serve the public interest.

The examples above are for illustrative purposes only and should **not** limit, direct, or otherwise influence your response.

Your answer should address the IAASB and IESBA collectively; however, you may wish to also highlight matters specifically for the IAASB or IESBA (if applicable, you could use separate headings to address such matters).

- The priority should be effective implementation and adoption of existing standards rather than continuing developments of new requirements. The Code and standards should be as principles based as possible. They should be compact and clear with long-term value. Environments change rapidly so detailed rules-based regulations are quickly outdated.

When there are signs indicating guidance is needed on specific topics, new or more specific standards are not always the solution. We would prefer options like an e-learning, supporting explanations (NAM) etc. to support the application of the principles in the occurring circumstances.

- Alignment between the Code and the standards is important. We urge the Boards to ensure that projects that have impact on both the standards and the Code are conducted in an integrated approach and simultaneously open for public comment and consideration. For example, this was the case regarding project external expert. Now the IESBA has launched a workstream on private equity investment in accounting firms. However, private equity investments in accounting firms has also impact on the quality standards of the IAASB. It seems this is not included and a project solely by IESBA. Hence, we highlight the importance of working together on projects.

- Measures to promote transparency in due process and governance are vital for fostering stakeholder trust in standards, as well as their consistent adoption and implementation:

- **Stakeholder Input** – Emphasizing the necessity of balanced participation from all stakeholders, while ensuring adequate involvement from practitioners to enhance the practicality and effectiveness of high-quality standards, particularly in a rapidly changing environment.
- **Transparency** – Proposing approaches to reinforce stakeholder confidence through increased transparency in Board decisions, including clear communication on how feedback was incorporated when determining the rationale for initiating standard-setting; addressing matters of public interest; and documenting final decisions regarding the standards.

## SECTION IV: KEY TRENDS IMPACTING THE SSBs

### Background and Context

The IAASB's and IESBA's SWPs are shaped by their environment. Shifts in the SSBs' environment influence what topics need to be prioritized, the actions that will best serve the public interest and the timing of such actions. Key trends and changes in the environment create opportunities and challenges and will significantly shape their future SWPs.

Given the rapidly changing environment, the SSBs recognize the importance and potential difficulty in identifying which trends will be the most impactful at the start of the next strategy period in 2028, and how the relevance of these trends may evolve over time. Therefore, the SSBs will remain agile and adapt as necessary throughout the development process of their SWPs as well as during the next strategy period.

The most relevant and impactful trends will be incorporated in the SSBs' SWPs as strategic drivers.<sup>2</sup> These strategic drivers will assist the SSBs in identifying the opportunities and challenges that affect their ability to deliver on their public interest mandates, while guiding the development of their respective work plans. Although specific trends might have a greater or lesser impact, or imply a certain focus or perspective, for each SSB's work, the strategic drivers may also lead to the identification of topics or items where both SSBs have a role to play, given the connectivity between the SSBs (see **section V**).

In addition to trends impacting the SSBs, there are internal factors relating to the SSBs' governance, structure and operations that will influence how they prioritize standard-setting and related activities and determine future actions. These internal factors are **not** part of this survey. However, they will also inform the SSBs' deliberations and will be incorporated as strategic drivers in developing the IAASB's and IESBA's Consultation Papers on their future SWPs.

### Key Trends Impacting SSBs

For the purposes of this survey, the SSBs have included a summary of the trends that may shape their environment and the work they do in the future. To develop this summary, the SSBs conducted a comprehensive review of a wide range of sources of information, including news and publications from jurisdictional auditing and ethics standard-setting bodies, leading financial news outlets, and industry research reports. This multi-source approach enabled the identification of recurring themes and data-supported forecasts across key areas of work for professional accountants. In addition, the SSBs have benefited from input from their Stakeholder Advisory Council (SAC)<sup>3</sup> and from the JSS<sup>4</sup>.

Each of the trends that follow was identified for its potential impact on the financial and non-financial reporting ecosystem, including the SSBs' standard-setting landscape in the coming years. The summary of trends is intended to provide a forward-looking, yet grounded, basis to support information gathering, and open a dialogue with stakeholders.

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<sup>2</sup> Strategic drivers are the factors that drive the opportunities and challenges impacting the SSBs' ability to deliver on their mandates in the public interest.

<sup>3</sup> More information about the SAC's discussions can be found in the [May 2025 SAC Meeting](#) (Agenda Item 2 and Meeting Highlights) and the [October 2025 SAC Meeting](#) (Agenda Item 1 and Meeting Highlights).

<sup>4</sup> = IAASB and IESBA Jurisdictional Standard Setters (JSS) Liaison Groups (see "[About IAASB](#)" and "[About IESBA](#)" webpages for more information)

## SECTION IV: KEY TRENDS IMPACTING THE SSBs

### A – Digital Transformation

Rapid digital transformation, driven by the pace and nature of technological innovation and evolution, is reshaping the global economic and business landscape, creating both opportunities and challenges. Three areas stand out as examples of digital transformation that will influence the future of standard setting.

- A1. **Increasing Use of Emerging Technologies:** Businesses and industries are undergoing transformations driven by the adoption and increasing use of emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled tools and agents, internet of things, and blockchain. These technologies exhibit unique characteristics that present tremendous opportunities for increased quality, effectiveness, and efficiency, but also raise new and different challenges and risks to be managed.
- A2. **Digital Assets and Institutionalization of Digital Assets:** Given the growing use of emerging technologies such as blockchain, digital assets, including cryptocurrencies, have become more popular and their institutionalization is accelerating.
- A3. **Financial Crimes Enabled by Technology:** The growing use of emerging technology has also given rise to significant threats to cybersecurity and a significant rise in unlawful activities that exploit digital systems, networks, and AI-enabled tools and agents to commit, conceal, or facilitate financial misconduct.

<b>Potential Impact on Audit, Assurance, Quality Management, Ethics and Independence Matters</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to modernize or enhance the standards, or provide guidance to support stakeholders in navigating the application of the standards amid these developments.</li> <li>• Extended stakeholder engagement, including with emerging technologies experts.</li> </ul>	
<b>Potential Impact on Audit, Assurance and Quality Management Matters for IAASB’s Consideration</b>	<b>Potential Impact on Ethics and Independence Matters for IESBA’s Consideration</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible need for the development of guidance (e.g., guidance about the use of emerging technological tools, auditing digital assets, blockchain audit trails and reinforcing the exercise of professional skepticism and professional judgment when using technological tools).</li> <li>• Increased emphasis on, or emergence of different types of assurance engagements (e.g., assurance over emerging technological tools, system controls, AI governance, and cybersecurity).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethics and independence considerations relating to the use of AI by professional accountants in public practice and in business and other professionals who use IESBA standards (for example, accountability and threats to professional competence and due care, objectivity and confidentiality).</li> <li>• Over-reliance on the use of technology and its impact on objectivity, professional judgment and professional skepticism.</li> <li>• Growing threats relating to financial crimes</li> </ul>

	and cybersecurity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changing business models and governance, and potential impacts on ethics and independence.</li> </ul>
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**5A. Indicate the extent to which you believe this trend will increase or decrease in importance for the SSBs for their next strategy period starting in 2028.**

**A.1 Digital Transformation – Increasing Use of Emerging Technologies**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
	X					

*[If a respondent selects “6 to 1”]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

The increasing use of emerging technologies offers significant opportunities to enhance audit quality and efficiency, but also introduces new risks, including over-reliance on technology. Technology evolves quickly and it is not the role for standards to keep pace with every change in technology. It is therefore essential that standards remain principle based and continue to rely on the exercise of professional judgment and professional skepticism. The accountant must remain responsible for decisions and critically assess output generated by technologies such as AI.

It is important that accountants are supported in the transformations driven by the adoption and increasing use of emerging technologies. This requires focus from the boards. If necessary, standards should be adequately and timely revised. Additionally, non-authoritative guidance could support practitioners in applying principles in a rapidly evolving technological environment, for example by addressing the assessment of technology outputs such as AI and maintaining professional skepticism.

We notice an opportunity for the audit to be more relevant (for instance continuous auditing). Standard setters can contribute to this by enhancing standards to facilitate to implement these innovations. For instance, by the present standards there are only two types of procedures possible: substantive procedures and test of controls. By new technology these procedures are mixed and the procedures do not comply to the strict definition and the need to classify the procedures can be a complicating factor.

*[If a respondent selects “0”]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

N/A

**A.2 Digital Transformation – Digital Assets and Institutionalization of Digital Assets**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
		X				

*[If a respondent selects “6 to 1”]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

Blockchain, digital assets, including cryptocurrency or other emerging technologies can be complex. Technical capabilities of financial auditors might be insufficient to fully assess for example the use of blockchain technology and cryptocurrency. Part of the audit needs to be performed by other professionals This will cause an increase in use of specialists and the increasing importance of professional skepticism and judgement of the accountant. Any response, if needed, should focus on non-authoritative guidance or knowledge-sharing rather than the creation of new standards.

*[If a respondent selects “0”]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

N/A

**A.3 Digital Transformation – Financial Crimes Enabled by Technology**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
		X				

*[If a respondent selects “6 to 1”]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

While evolving risks such as cyber threats may increase expectations on auditors, particularly in areas such as risk assessment and going concern, this does not in itself lead to a need for adjusted standards. The existing standards are sufficient to use in this context.

This trend can also relate to more collaboration with specialists and the increasing importance of the professional skepticism and judgement of the accountant. Any response, if needed, should focus on non-authoritative guidance or knowledge-sharing rather than the creation of new standards.

*[If a respondent selects “0”]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

N/A

## B – Changes in the Geopolitical and Regulatory Landscape

Changes to the geopolitical and regulatory landscape (in)directly influence how the SSBs' international standards evolve. Four areas stand out as particularly illustrative of how these changes shape the environment in which the SSBs operate:

- B1. **Regulatory Changes:** Financial markets, including the accounting and auditing profession, are navigating a complex regulatory environment, with ongoing changes driven by the need for market stability and to prevent economic disruptions, as well as a trend towards reducing regulatory burdens to enhance economic competitiveness and foster innovation and economic growth.
- B2. **Risk of Fragmentation:** In many jurisdictions there is a move away from international alignment toward a more national / regional focus. As a result, different jurisdictions, industries, or organizations may use varied and sometimes conflicting frameworks, rules, and metrics for reporting information. Such fragmentation contributes to uncertainties, adds costs and administrative burdens for providers of professional services and their clients, and erodes trust and confidence in financial and non-financial reporting.
- B3. **Call for Greater Agility in Standard Setting:** Professional accountants and other stakeholders have been emphasizing the need for a more adaptive standard-setting process that allows for addressing issues in a timelier manner. This includes calls for consideration of issuing non-authoritative materials instead of launching standard-setting projects, or undertaking more narrow-scope standard setting to address targeted matters, depending on the circumstances.
- B4. **Greater Diversity of Voices Sought:** Reflecting the broad use of SSBs' standards, there are calls for greater inclusion of voices from emerging economies. The ability to respond to particular needs may impact the adoption and implementation of global standards. It may also impact which stakeholders to connect with and the nature of standards and guidance the SSBs develop.

### Potential Impact on Audit, Assurance, Quality Management, Ethics and Independence Matters

- Need to identify potential areas of simplification (including scalability and proportionality).
- Need for increased agility and responsiveness.
- Balance the need for the development of standards (through either full-scope and narrow-scope projects) with the development of non-authoritative materials.
- Increased coordination and collaboration between the SSBs and with other standards setters.
- Strengthened stakeholder engagement, including with investors and those charged with governance.

**5B. Indicate the extent to which you believe this trend will increase or decrease in importance for the SSBs for their next strategy period starting in 2028.**

**B.1 Changes in the Geopolitical and Regulatory Landscape – Regulatory Changes**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
	X					

*[If a respondent selects “6 to 1”]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

In the current environment, there is a clear move toward simplification and reduction of regulatory burden in several jurisdictions. In this context, it is particularly important that standard setters do not contribute further to complexity of standards. Standard setters should stand back and reflect on simplification.

The focus of standard setters should therefore change from expanding the body of standards to the effective transposition and implementation of existing standards. Increased standard setting elevates the risk of fragmentation in implementation. With respect to current IESBA projects we foresee implementation issues as these projects threaten to exceed our mandate for standard setting.

There should be more emphasis on principles-based regulations. This creates more robust regulations for the long term. This also relates to the EU principle of proportionality.

*[If a respondent selects “0”]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

N/A

**B.2 – Changes in the Geopolitical and Regulatory Landscape - Risk of Fragmentation**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
	X					

*[If a respondent selects “6 to 1”]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

Emphasizing high-quality, scalable, and principles-based standards encourages global acceptance and helps prevent fragmented regulations across jurisdictions. It is also crucial to sustain and strengthen communication with standard setters and regulators in different regions to track and respond to new issues affecting international standards.

There is potential for closer alignment and simplification of jurisdictional and international standards, presenting an opportunity for substantial convergence.

*[If a respondent selects "0"]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

N/A

**B.3 Changes in the Geopolitical and Regulatory Landscape - Call for Greater Agility in Standard Setting**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
	X					

*[If a respondent selects "6 to 1"]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

Ongoing geopolitical impacts and the opposing risks and opportunities of jurisdictional fragmentation/alignment further enhance the criticality of the Boards ability to be agile and have processes to be able to respond to emerging issues on a more rapid and efficient manner.

This argues for a Code and standards to be as principles-based as possible. They should be compact and clear with long-term value. Environments change rapidly so detailed rules-based regulations are quickly outdated.

When there are signs guidance is needed on specific topics, new or more specific standards are not always the solution. We would prefer options like an e-learning, webinars, Q&A's, supporting explanations etc. to support the application of the principles in the occurring circumstances.

*[If a respondent selects "0"]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

N/A

**B.4 Changes in the Geopolitical and Regulatory Landscape - Greater Diversity of Voices Sought**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
			X			

*[If a respondent selects “6 to 1”]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

Overall, this trend would be better characterized as “no change” rather than increasing or decreasing in importance. Both Boards have over recent years conducted extensive regional outreach, which should be maintained, including efforts to enhance engagement with investors, preparers and those charged with governance.

The primary objective should remain and be the development of clear, practical, and globally applicable standards which should meet the expectations and needs of major stakeholders.

*[If a respondent selects “0”]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

N/A

### C – Evolving Expectations Concerning Sustainability Information

Global challenges regarding sustainability are reshaping expectations for transparency, accountability, and corporate responsibility in addressing the diverse risks and opportunities associated with sustainability matters. These expectations underscore the need for globally consistent approaches that support public trust in sustainability reporting and assurance.

- C1. Continuing Demand for Sustainability Reporting and Assurance: Reporting on sustainability information continues to grow as a critical component of corporate transparency. Stakeholders, including users of financial and non-financial information and regulators, are demanding more comprehensive and reliable sustainability disclosures. Also, sustainability information is more and more interconnected with financial information.
- C2. Regulatory and Geopolitical Changes: The sustainability regulatory landscape has evolved beyond climate reporting, with amendments to existing regulations and the potential emergence of new jurisdictional and international requirements. On the other hand, some jurisdictions are in the process of recalibrating their previously announced requirements around sustainability reporting and assurance.

Potential Impact on Audit, Assurance, Quality Management, Ethics and Independence Matters	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring the adoption and implementation of the SSBs' Sustainability Standards and providing timely responses to implementation questions or challenges, including the need to develop further guidance or standards.</li> <li>Establishing potentially new mechanisms to develop materials in an agile fashion and to draw on specialized expertise.</li> <li>Extended outreach to ensure alignment, interoperability and global consistency across jurisdictions.</li> </ul>	
Potential Impact on Audit, Assurance and Quality Management Matters for IAASB Considerations	Potential Impact on Ethics and Independence Matters for IESBA Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address the increased connectivity between sustainability assurance and financial audits to contribute to a coherent approach and consistent assurance quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of need for ethics standards for all preparers of sustainability information.</li> </ul>

**5C. Indicate the extent to which you believe this trend will increase or decrease in importance for the SSBs for their next strategy period starting in 2028.**

**C.1 Evolving Expectations Concerning Sustainability Information – Continuing Demand for Sustainability Reporting and Assurance**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
				X		

*[If a respondent selects "6 to 1"]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

While we expect reporting on sustainability information stays a critical component of corporate transparency, we do not expect it to grow. Sustainability engagements do not fundamentally change the existing principles-based framework.

*[If a respondent selects "0"]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

N/A

**C.2 Evolving Expectations Concerning Sustainability Information – Regulatory and Geopolitical Changes**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
					X	

*[If a respondent selects “6 to 1”]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

By 2028 many jurisdictions may be moving into a first phase of mandatory sustainability reporting and assurance. Others may still be in an adoption phase. Through this period, we do not anticipate any drivers that would lead to an increase in importance of this trend for the Boards. Rather, in the next few years there will likely be more a period of monitoring and evaluating adoption and reporting practices.

*[If a respondent selects “0”]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

N/A

**D – Evolving Structure and Business Models of Accounting Firms**

The accounting profession is undergoing profound shifts in how its work and firms are structured, financed, and operated, with direct implications for the future of audit, assurance, and ethics standard setting.

- D1. Alternative Ownership Structures: Changing ownership structures raise quality management, and ethics and auditor independence considerations, including on firms’ ethical culture. In particular, private equity organizations are increasingly investing in accounting firms, driving growth and technological innovation.
- D2. Increased Involvement of Non-Professional Accountants in the Accounting and Auditing Profession: Traditionally, accounting firms were staffed almost exclusively with accountants and auditors. Now, like other private enterprises, a growing share of their workforce consists of specialists from other disciplines, such as technology, data science, law, consulting and sustainability.
- D3. Challenges to Attracting and Retaining Talent: The accounting and auditing industry is facing an increasing challenge in attracting and retaining talent, driven by perceptions of the industry as less dynamic and the allure or alternative career paths. Also, given the rapid changes in technology, firms will need to attract and retain talent, and build capacity, in areas where there is strong competition for talent.
- D4. Non-Assurance Service Line: The growth of non-assurance services has become a major source of revenue for accounting firms compared to fees for their audit and assurance services. If there is a

corporate scandal or failure related to the provision of these services, it impacts the trust in the accountancy profession and its public interest role.

Potential Impact on Audit, Assurance and Quality Management Matters for IAASB Considerations	Potential Impact on Ethics and Independence Matters for IESBA Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need for guidance or potential enhancement of standards that address firm level or engagement level quality management. For example, the impact on the governance and leadership, client acceptance and continuance, relevant ethical requirements, and information and communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration of issues related to ethics and independence raised by private equity investments in firms and their impact on firm culture, and whether, and how, guidance or standards could help address challenges to a firm's ethical culture arising from new ownership models.</li> <li>Consideration of challenges regarding familiarity and compliance with the IESBA Code of Ethics in a multidisciplinary context.</li> </ul>

**5D. Indicate the extent to which you believe this trend will increase or decrease in importance for the SSBs for their next strategy period starting in 2028.**

**D.1 Evolving Structure and Business Models of Accounting Firms - Alternative Ownership Structures**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
		X				

*[If a respondent selects "6 to 1"]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

Private equity investment in accountancy firms has increased in recent years. While such investments can support growth, innovation, and succession planning on the shorter term, they also raise important questions about governance, quality management, independence, and professional control on the longer term. Our legislation requires that accountants retain a majority of voting rights and maintain decisive influence over the firm. In practice, however, complex ownership and governance structures involving private equity may create uncertainty as to whether this majority exists not only formally, but also in substance.

Alignment between the Code and the Standards is important. We urge the Boards to ensure that projects that have impact on both the Standards and the Code are conducted in an integrated approach and simultaneously open for public comment and consideration. For example, the IESBA has launched a workstream on private equity investment in accounting firms. However, private equity

investments in accounting firms have also impact on the quality standards of the IAASB. It seems this is not included and a project solely by IESBA. Hence, we highlight the importance of working together in projects

*[If a respondent selects "0"]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

N/A

**D.2 Evolving Structure and Business Models of Accounting Firms - Increased Involvement of Non-Professional Accountants in the Accounting and Auditing Profession**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
						X

*[If a respondent selects "6 to 1"]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

N/A

*[If a respondent selects "0"]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

Increased Involvement of Non-Professional Accountants in the Accounting and Auditing Profession is not a new trend. This has been ongoing for years. The standards and guidance are sufficient for involvement of Non-Professional Accountants, hence we do not see this as a trend to be considered by the boards.

**D.3 Evolving Structure and Business Models of Accounting Firms - Challenges to Attracting and Retaining Talent**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
						X

*[If a respondent selects "6 to 1"]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

N/A

*[If a respondent selects "0"]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

Some of the evolving structures can result in more focus on efficiency and profits, more standardization. This is less attractive for retaining or attracting talents. Changes in team composition, staff retention, and related matters can influence engagement quality and ethical conduct. There should be a focus on the main objectives of the accounting profession and coaching of talent. However, we do not see the impact on standard-setting of the boards relating to this development.

**D.4 Evolving Structure and Business Models of Accounting Firms - Non-Assurance Service Line**

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance	0 I do not agree that this is a trend to be considered
		x				

*[If a respondent selects "6 to 1"]*

Do you wish to highlight any matters relating to this trend or identified impacts, or any additional impacts, for the IAASB or IESBA or both the SSBs?

We have noticed an increase by accounting firms to engage in non-assurance services. This can result in independence issues or a decrease in the focus on high quality audits. Especially when there is more profit to gain on advisory services than fixed fees for audit engagements. This development reinforces the need for robust quality controls to safeguard audit quality.

Even though we see an increase in non-assurance services, we are highly concerned regarding standard setting for firms providing mainly non-assurance services (especially non-assurance services which are not related to assurance) due to restrictions in our mandate. We cannot implement standards outside of our mandate. This increases the risk of fragmentation.

*[If a respondent selects "0"]*

Please explain why you do not believe this should be considered a relevant trend for the SSBs:

N/A

**Other Trends and Ranking**

**6. Are there trends or related areas or matters that you believe the SSBs should consider that are not covered? If so, please provide details.**

- Yes

*[If “yes” is selected, text boxes appear.]*

Please number your additional trend (O.1, O.2, O.3, ...)

O1. Evaluation of ongoing and proposed projects

Please describe the additional trend

We encourage the IESBA and IAASB to critically evaluate whether ongoing and proposed projects are necessary and add value within a principles-based framework for accountants. A key consideration should be whether identified issues are already addressed by existing principles, and whether additional requirements result in unnecessary complexity or leaning more to rules based.

We strongly support maintaining a clear focus on rules and guidance for accountants providing audit, assurance or related services, rather than broadening the scope to other professional groups (e.g. CFOs regarding the Role of the CFO project or all assurance practitioners regarding the IESSA).

If new requirements are nevertheless proposed, it is essential to clearly articulate the specific gap in the current principles, and to explain how any new material logically derives from, and is anchored in, the existing fundamental principles of the Code.

On a scale of 1 to 6, indicate the extent to which you believe this trend will increase or decrease in importance for the SSBs for their next strategy period starting in 2028.

6 Strongly increasing in importance	5 Increasing in importance	4 Slightly increasing in importance	3 Slightly decreasing in importance	2 Decreasing in importance	1 Strongly decreasing in importance
X					

Do you wish to explain your rating or highlight any matters relating to this trend for the IAASB, IESBA, or both the SSBs?

See above

*[Further boxes will appear to add more than one trend, if necessary]*

- No

**7. Based on your evaluation of the identified trends, please rank what you believe are the TOP FIVE most important trends for the SSBs to consider for their next strategy period starting in 2028.**

Please enter the trend code for each of your top five trends (e.g. A.1, B.3), **in order of importance from 1 to 5**, where 1 is the most important. You may include:

- Any of the pre-identified trends (A.1 to D.4), and/or
- Any additional trends you identified above (e.g., O.1).

- 1 – [O1. Regulation burden and principles-based regulations]
- 2 – [Alignment between the Code and standards]
- 3 – [Technology developments (AI) and professional criticism]
- 4 – [Non-financial information and in control statements and focus to it for the audit]
- 5 – [New business models of audit firms]

**Another point of interest is the complexity and the pressure of regulations.**

## SECTION V: AREAS FOR JOINT ACTIONS IN SSBs' WORK PLANS

### Background and Context

Although the IAASB and IESBA are independent Boards, each with its own remit, their standard-setting actions have a collective impact on the financial and non-financial reporting ecosystem. Given this collective impact, the two SSBs work closely together to ensure their standards are interoperable and complementary. They endeavor to maintain and enhance their coordination on topics of mutual interest, including improving on the early identification of work plan topics where both SSBs have a role to play and can act jointly or in parallel.

Both the IAASB and IESBA anticipate that certain projects or initiatives on their current 2024–2027 work plans will be carried over to their 2028–2031 work plans.<sup>5</sup> The SSBs will elaborate on these topics or initiatives, as well as possible new projects or initiatives for their 2028–2031 SWP period, in their respective Consultation Papers targeted for the end of 2026.

This survey focuses **only** on the call from various stakeholders for the early identification of possible joint or parallel work plan topics, or other initiatives or activities. Based on the trends identified in **Section IV** and stakeholders' expectations about the collective impact of the IAASB's and IESBA's work, the SSBs are seeking feedback about areas of common interest that may lead to potential projects or initiatives in which both SSBs have a role to play and that may be undertaken jointly or in parallel.

### Questions or Matters for Stakeholder Input

8. **Please share your views about areas of common interest and possible joint or parallel work plan topics (e.g., standard-setting or non-authoritative materials), or other initiatives or activities.**

The new business model of audit firms (private equity) and developments in technology.  
Instead of more regulation more focus on non-authoritative materials as webinars etc.

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<sup>5</sup> The IAASB's Work Plan for 2024–2027 is included in the IAASB's [Strategy and Work Plan for 2024-2027](#) and IESBA's Work Plan for 2024–2027 is included in the IESBA's [Strategy and Work Plan for 2024-2027](#). See **Appendix 1** for a summary of projects or workstreams that are on the IAASB's and IESBA's work plans for 2026 and 2027, some of which are expected to be carried over to the next work plan period.

**APPENDIX 1**

**SUMMARY OF IAASB WORK PLAN**

Projects or Initiatives	Targeted Milestones	
	2026	2027
Post-Implementation Review of ISA 540 (Revised) <sup>6</sup>	Recommendations	
Post-Implementation Review – Public Interest Entity– Joint SSBs Action		Revisit Public Interest Entity definition
Maintenance of The ISA for Less Complex Entities	Exposure Draft	Final Standard
Audit Evidence and Risk Response	Exposure Draft	Final Standard
ISRE 2410 <sup>7</sup>	Exposure Draft	Final Standard
Technology Quality Management Workstream	Action Plan Work commences	Ongoing Work
Other Standards in the ISA 500-Series	Project Proposal Exposure Draft	Post-exposure development
Post-Implementation Review of ISA 315 (Revised 2019) <sup>8</sup>		Information Gathering
ISA 320 – Materiality in Planning and Performing an Audit		Information Gathering

<sup>6</sup> International Standard on Auditing (ISA) 540 (Revised), *Auditing Accounting Estimates and Related Disclosures*

<sup>7</sup> International Standard on Review Engagements (ISRE) 2410, *Review of Interim Financial Information Performed by the Independent Auditor of the Entity*

<sup>8</sup> ISA 315 (Revised 2019), *Identifying and Assessing the Risks of Material Misstatement*

## SUMMARY OF IESBA WORK PLAN

Projects or Initiatives	Targeted Milestones	
	2026	2027
Collective Investment Vehicles and Pension Funds	Non-authoritative Materials	
Firm Culture and Governance	Non-authoritative Materials and Other Initiatives; Firm Culture and Governance framework	Non-authoritative Materials and Other Initiatives; Firm Culture and Governance framework
Exploring Extending the Impact of the Code to All Preparers of Sustainability Information		Terms of Reference and Information Gathering
Role of the CFOs	Information Gathering; Report and Recommendations	
Development of Profession-Agnostic Independence Standards for Sustainability Assurance Engagements not Within the Scope of Part 5	Information Gathering; Report and Recommendations	
Business Relationships		Terms of Reference and Information Gathering
Audit firm – Audit Client Relationship		Terms of Reference and Information Gathering
Post-Implementation Review – Non-compliance with Laws and Regulations	Information Gathering; Report and Recommendations	
Post-Implementation Review – Restructured Code	Information Gathering; Report and Recommendations	
Post-Implementation Review – Long Association Phase 2		Terms of Reference
Post-Implementation Review – Non-Assurance Services and Fees		Terms of Reference

Joint IESBA and IAASB Stakeholder Survey  
*Strategy and Workplans for 2028-2031*

Post-Implementation Review – Public Interest Entity - Joint SSBs' Action		Terms of Reference
Post-Implementation Review – Engagement Team - Group Audit Independence		Terms of Reference