ISO 14001:2026 TRANSITION

1. Subject and Normative Context

On 15 April 2026, the new edition of the international standard ISO 14001:2026 (Environmental management systems - Requirements with guidance for use) was published, replacing the previous version ISO 14001:2015 (including Amendment Amd1:2024).

The mandatory provisions, binding timelines, and operational workflow established by the international body Global Accreditation Cooperation Incorporated (Global ACI), as set out in mandatory document TECH-3-TR_2029-04-30, are detailed below to enable the orderly transition of accredited certificates.

> 📌 **DURATION OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD**
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> The global transition period for adapting environmental management systems to the new ISO 14001:2026 has a duration of three years (36 months), with a strict deadline set for 30 April 2029. Beyond this date, certificates issued against ISO 14001:2015 will lose all legal and accreditation validity.

2. Summary of Key Changes in ISO 14001:2026

The overall impact of the revisions introduced by ISO 14001:2026 is considered manageable and intuitive for organizations that have already developed a mature management system. The changes aim to align the standard with the new harmonized structure and respond to emerging challenges in the global socio-economic and environmental context. The changes of greatest technical relevance are highlighted below:

- **Alignment to the Harmonized Structure (Annex SL & TMB Resolution 16/2025):** Harmonization of the normative framework and updating of the terms and definitions section to align with the Harmonized Structure.
- **Documented Information:** Introduction of the new phrasing for documented information and explicit clarification of the requirement that documented information must actually be made available ("documented information shall be available").
- **Planning of Changes (Clause 6.3):** Introduction of the new Clause 6.3 dedicated to the planning of changes to manage modifications to the environmental management system in a structured manner.
- **Management Review (Clause 9.3):** Integration and expansion of sub-clauses relating to management review to strengthen strategic control over environmental performance.
- **Clarification of Key Concepts in Annex A of ISO 14001:2026:** Clarifications on organizational context, risks and opportunities, Life Cycle Perspective, and alignment with corporate strategy and business processes.

3. Key Timelines and Transition Schedule

To ensure a coordinated transition and prevent disruptions in certificate validity, mandatory document Global ACI TECH-3-TR_2029-04-30 imposes a precise timeline of activities for Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) and Certified Organizations:

Milestone / Activity	Milestone / Activity	Milestone / Activity
Publication of ISO 14001:2026	April 2026	Issue of the new standard. The organization can initiate gap analysis and internal training.
Launch of transition audits	By 30 April 2027	The body launches transition audits for certified organizations (during surveillance, renewal, or special audits).
Cut-off for new ISO 14001:2015 certifications	31 October 2027	All new certificates will be issued exclusively against ISO 14001:2026.
Final transition deadline	30 April 2029	Strict deadline (36 months). Non-transitioned ISO 14001:2015 certificates lose validity and are withdrawn.

4. Operational Process and Audit Arrangements for Certified Clients

The transition of certification for previously certified organizations will take place according to a structured process aimed at verifying the actual conformity of the management system to the new requirements. The established operational methods are detailed below:

4.1 Planning the Transition Audit

The transition audit may be conducted through one of the following methods:

- **During a scheduled audit:** During the annual surveillance audit or recertification audit.
- **Via a dedicated special audit:** Upon request by the organization, should it wish to anticipate the transition independently of the deadlines of the current certification cycle.

4.2 Scope and Audit Requirements

The audit conducted by our assessors will thoroughly verify:

- The modified requirements or requirements introduced ex novo by ISO 14001:2026 (including planning of changes 6.3, management review 9.3, life cycle perspective, and environmental context and risk management);
- The updated context analysis of the company and evaluation of interested party expectations;
- The adaptation of system documentation and the effectiveness of corrective actions/adjustments implemented.

4.3 Audit Methodologies and Duration

In line with the provisions of the mandatory document:

- **Remote Audit (ICT):** The transition audit may be conducted remotely through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in accordance with document IAF MD 4 (Global ACI TECH-3-003), subject to prior verification of feasibility and technical suitability.
- **Additional Audit Time:** The Body will evaluate any need to supplement audit man-days in accordance with standard ISO/IEC 17021-1 and guideline IAF MD 5 (Global ACI TECH-3-004). This additional time allocation will depend on the degree of modification made to the EMS by the organization.
  Where the transition takes place during the ordinary audit (surveillance/renewal), the additional time will be minimized or not required; if the organization requests a dedicated special audit, the required time commitment will be quantified in advance during the planning phase (indicatively starting from 0.5 man-days on-site and 0.25 man-days reporting).

4.4 Certification Decision and Certificate Management

Following a positive outcome of the transition audit and a positive decision by the Body (subsequently to the formalization of the Body's accreditation), the transition to ISO 14001:2026 will be granted with the issuance of the new certificate of conformity.

ISO 14001:2015 certificates maintain the expiry date linked to their natural three-year cycle, remaining understood that their validity is limited to 30 April 2029 in case of failure to transition to ISO 14001:2026. To ensure maximum transparency and avoid misunderstandings in the market, certificates issued against ISO 14001:2015 during the transition period will bear a specific explanatory wording.

5. Practical Guidance and Next Steps for Certified Clients

In order to ensure a smooth and issue-free transition, we advise each certified organization to promptly initiate the following internal action plan:

- **Phase 1 - Internal Gap Analysis:** Purchase the ISO 14001:2026 standard and perform a gap analysis between your EMS and the new requirements (with particular focus on planning of changes, management review, life cycle perspective, and environmental context/risks).
- **Phase 2 - Personnel Training:** Raise awareness and train management, process owners, and internal auditors on normative changes.
- **Phase 3 - EMS Adaptation:** Update system documentation, risk/opportunity management processes, and the definition of change monitoring.
- **Phase 4 - Audit Planning with the Body:** Contact our planning service to agree on the time window for the transition audit (preferably during the 2027-2028 surveillance or recertification).

> 📌 **CONSEQUENCES OF NON-TRANSITION**
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> Should an organization decide not to transition to ISO 14001:2026, remaining audits will be conducted against ISO 14001:2015. However, it should be noted that the validity of the certification cannot in any case extend beyond 30 April 2029, on which date the certification will be officially withdrawn ex officio.

6. Contact and Technical Support

Our technical team remains at your full disposal for clarifications and to support you in the ideal planning of your transition pathway.