

ZNU-Standard – driving sustainable change

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Z 9-1 Quality assurance and dialogue

Having published a first version in autumn 2013 with a focus on producing companies in the food industry, we are now pleased to present the *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change* which is open to all branches and internationally applicable.

The *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change* is a result of collaboration. Starting in 2010, experts from the fields of science, business and politics and from certification bodies have joined their efforts to develop a sound sustainability standard that is applicable in practice, independent of company size and sector, links up with existing systems, and aims to promote sustainability at company level.

The standard setter is the ZNU – Center for Sustainable Leadership, an application-oriented research institute at the Faculty of Management and Economics, Witten / Herdecke University. Taking scientifically grounded self-assessment tools as a basis, the ZNU has developed the *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change* which allows certification by third parties. A high-ranking advisory board with experts from science and industry as well as a large network in academia and the business community provide continuous professional and practical input. We cooperate closely with certification bodies.

The ZNU perceives it as an ongoing task to systematically develop and advance content and quality of the *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change*, specifically with a view to integrating new political frameworks (e.g. UN SDGs – United Nations Sustainable Development Goals), new or revised private-sector standards (e.g. ISO standards) and latest scientific findings related to the planning, implementation and efficiency of sustainability standards. It is the responsibility of the ZNU to collate, evaluate, discuss and where necessary to amend the experience and expertise of all parties involved in the audit process (companies, certification bodies, auditors and consultants). This applies to the *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change* as much as to certification procedures, audit documentation, audit reporting including checklists, the certificate and its potential uses in communication. The ZNU receives audit results from certification bodies and audit reports from companies and performs accompanying audits on a regular basis with the aim to steadily improve the quality of the *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change*.

With the aim of preventive quality assurance in mind, all parties involved in the certification process as well as other stakeholders are invited to contact the standard setter and / or the certification body whenever there are indications of complaints regarding the quality of the standard. This may encompass, for example, the integrity of the *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change*, or the public reputation of a certificate holder or a certification body. The ZNU will record and examine such suspected cases or complaints and decide how to proceed. Open and solution-oriented dialogue with all interested stakeholders is a basic prerequisite to assure the quality of the *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change*.

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If you have questions, comments or suggestions, please feel free to contact us!

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Z 9-2 Acknowledgements

First of all, our special thanks go to Kesta Ludemann whose high level of dedication and personal commitment help to ensure and steadily improve the quality of the *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change* in terms of content and procedures. Further, we are grateful to Jona Nelson for his valuable contributions to the digital implementation of the standard and its assured success in practical application. In addition to the co-authors of the *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change 2018*, we thank the following persons for content-related work and active support: Verena Timmer, Dr. Florian Schäfer, Mirjam Rübhelke-Alo, Dr. Ulrike Eberle, Patricia Kief, Alicia Seifer, Susanne Kellermann, Markus Laumann, Marianne Schmid, Tim Gruchmann, Julius Wenzig, Simon Hauser, Jadwiga Zurad, Annalena Böke, Linda Dickert und Maren Raß.

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Further thanks for dedicated, constructive and ongoing collaboration go to TÜV Rheinland Cert and the other ZNU-approved certification bodies: ARS PROBATA, IFTA, LACON, PCU Deutschland and QAL Umweltgutachter.

In the course of the stakeholder dialogue we conducted in winter 2016/2017 in compliance with the ISEAL Standard Setting Code, we received numerous good ideas, comments and suggestions for improvement from partners in science, business and politics; this valuable input for which we are grateful was incorporated in the revised version of the standard. Here we would like to mention in particular the detailed feedback received from the Federal Government's Council for Sustainable Development.

Having published the *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change 2018*, we are now looking forward to further establishing it in the national and international context together with proven and new partners.

You are cordially invited to implement the *ZNU Standard – driving sustainable change* in your business and play an active role in its further development. Your feedback is welcome any time!



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