



issa

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION

ISSA Recognition Programme

Introduction

For Members

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ISSA Recognition

Introduction for Members

General Secretariat
International Social Security Association
Geneva

Overview

This introduction describes the International Social Security Association (ISSA) Recognition Programme and evaluation process for the ISSA Guidelines. It consists of two sections:

Section 1. An overview of the Recognition Programme process

Section 2. Detailed guidance to member institutions on how to prepare for an evaluation and what to provide to the evaluator

Each ISSA guideline also has a workbook specific to it that is used to record the evidence and result of the evaluation.

1. The Recognition Programme process

1.1. Overview of the Recognition Programme process

The ISSA is committed to helping its member organizations achieve excellence in social security administration. In order to do so, it has developed a range of services and products to support and develop administrative, managerial and operational capacities amongst member institutions.

These services and products are enshrined in the ISSA Centre for Excellence (CfE), and based on documents called Guidelines that have been drawn up to address specific areas of social security administration. These ISSA Guidelines describe sector-specific international professional standards contained in a series of individual guidelines. The Guidelines are a comprehensive compendium of professional standards of general application to social security institutions.

As part of rewarding excellence, ISSA has developed the Recognition Programme. The Programme seeks to recognize those institutions that have implemented those ISSA guidelines which are applicable to the area of social security concerned (such as good governance, ICT, and so on).

To do so, a desk-based independent external evaluation, based on evidence submitted by the organization, ascertains whether an organization has implemented the relevant ISSA guideline. The evaluation is carried out by an expert on the guideline.

If any issues are identified that need to be addressed before recognition is awarded, these are identified by the evaluator and communicated to the institution, which then has a set period of time to implement the necessary improvements.

In addition, the evaluator identifies, and reports on, any good practices or issues that would help the institution improve, based on the requirements in the guideline. It should be noted that these do not impact on the ability to be recognized.

Each individual guideline contains recommendations in the form of “structures” and “mechanisms” which describe possible ways of carrying out the requirements of the guideline. These do not however have to be undertaken in order to “pass” an individual guideline – they are just suggested good practice. The individual guideline statements themselves are the requirements that have to be met within the synergies of the country situation and the main goals and priorities of the institution.

1.2. Scope of recognition and the evaluation

There is a very wide diversity of ways of, and organizational structures for, implementing social security arrangements in different countries. The ISSA Guidelines and the Recognition Programme do not try to impose a uniform way of implementing social security arrangements – but they do recommend good practice that is universally applicable.

Generally speaking, institutions applying for recognition should demonstrate the implementation only of the individual guidelines that apply in regard to their legal mandate and agreed scope of services. They will however need to demonstrate to the evaluator during the recognition process why they consider other guidelines do not need to apply to them.

When an institution performs functions that must be complemented by activities in other entities in order to achieve the objectives of the local social security system, for example when other

entities are in charge of the administration of certain aspects of the system, it will need to demonstrate an appropriate level of inter-agency coordination as part of its evidence base.

1.3. Formal evaluation methodology

Before applying for recognition, the institution will have to carry out a self-assessment and ensure that it has the evidence to meet all of the relevant guidelines. Further details of this, and all steps that the institution has to take initially, are given in Section 2.

Once the organization is ready, it will contact the allocated evaluator using the form at the beginning of the workbook. This describes how the relevant processes are managed and undertaken in its country.

The main part of the evaluation is the gathering of formal evidence from the institution. A workbook for each guideline is used for recording the results of this evaluation. It contains a page for each individual guideline. There is a table on each page which contains:

- The wording of the individual guideline – these are the requirements that must be met.
- A space for the evaluator to tick “Compliant”, “Non-compliant” or “Not applicable”. This is completed by the evaluator after having considered the evidence.
- A space for the institution to explain in a few sentences how it meets the guideline.
- Examples of the types of evidence that could be provided by the institution. These are not mandatory or exclusive.
- A space for the institution to describe what evidence it is submitting.
- The conclusion of the evaluator and the justification for it.
- The colours used in the workbook have different meanings. Black is for a requirement or explanation. Blue is for completion by the evaluator. Red are the spaces filled in by the institution.

Initially the institution completes all the red boxes and submits the workbook and the listed evidence to ISSA through the dedicated My ISSA portal. The evaluator then considers the evidence for the guideline, asks for more details where necessary, and fills in the blue spaces based on their judgement of the evidence submitted.

Due to the length of some guidelines, the evaluator will only look in depth at a sample in such cases.

If evaluators feel that insufficient evidence has been provided by the institution to come to a judgement, then they will ask for more detailed evidence.

The definitions of the "Compliant", "Non-compliant" and “Not applicable” ratings for a guideline are:

- “Compliant” means that sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate that the requirements of the guideline have been met.

- “Non-compliant” means there is no evidence or insufficient evidence of the guideline’s implementation. In such cases, the evaluator must justify why the evidence provided is insufficient.
- “Not applicable” means that the implementation of the guideline falls outside the institution's mandate, or the relevant functions are performed by another entity. In such cases, the evaluator must provide justification for why it is not applicable.

Once all the relevant individual guidelines have been evaluated, the evaluator gives an overall rating for the institution:

- “Compliant” means every guideline tested is compliant or is justified as not applicable.
- If any individual guideline is rated as non-compliant, then the overall rating must be “Non-compliant”.

Finally, the evaluator will come to a conclusion about any good practices or issues for improvement identified during the evaluation (see section 4 below).

The completed workbook is then submitted to the institution, which fact-checks it and may add its own comments with information which it feels is relevant to the evaluation.

Once the workbook is received back from the institution, and any improvements have been made by the evaluator, it is submitted to ISSA.

If there are any guidelines identified as non-compliant, the institution is required to carry out improvements to deal with the non-compliant issue and provide evidence to the evaluator within six months of the date of the final report.

4

1.4. Good practices and suggestions for improvement

The evaluation process includes the identification and reporting of good practices and suggested areas for improvement. **This part of the process is for information only and does not influence the recognition result.**

When initially completing the workbook, the institution itself can suggest good practices to the evaluator, using the form given at the front of the workbook.

Then, during the evaluation itself, the evaluator will look for both good practices and potential areas for improvement, based on the structures and mechanisms attached to each individual guideline.

Evaluators do not have to provide examples of good practice or suggestions for improvement, but where they do, they should provide no more than four of each. These are recorded in the forms given in Appendices A and B respectively of the workbook and submitted to the institution at the end of the evaluation.

2. Guidance to a member institution on preparing for and taking part in an evaluation

2.1. Introduction

This section of the guidance describes what member institutions need to do to prepare for and take part in an evaluation. Please read through Section A before you begin to get an overview of the process.

When you initially apply to the ISSA you will be allocated an evaluator and provided with a portal on the ISSA website to enter your details of evidence. You will also be provided with the relevant workbook for the ISSA guidelines for which you are applying for recognition.

2.2. The process

2.2.1. Self-assessment

The first step is for you to carry out a self-assessment to find out if you need to improve in any areas before you formally submit. Go through each guideline in the workbooks and identify any of them where you feel that you do not have sufficient evidence to meet the requirements. Decide what action you need to take and carry it out. For example, this might mean writing an extra policy or procedure.

If any of the guidelines cover issues that are outside your mandate, you should make a note of this and also specify if another organization carries them out. You will not have to provide evidence for such guidelines.

5

2.2.2. Make the payment to ISSA

The process can only formally start when payment is received by ISSA.

2.2.3. Contact the evaluator

Once you feel that you have all the necessary evidence you should formally begin the recognition process. Contact the evaluator allocated to you using the form at the front of the workbook. This enables you to describe how the relevant processes are managed and undertaken in your country. Let the evaluator know when you will be able to formally submit the completed workbook and all the relevant evidence. At this point the evaluator may carry out some background checks to help inform his or her knowledge about the institution.

2.2.4. Identifying, recording and uploading evidence

Now you need to go through the guidelines in the workbook in detail. Discuss each guideline with the relevant staff and answer the two questions in red for each:

- **Explanation by the institution of how it meets the above guideline.** Write two or three paragraphs briefly explaining how your institution carries out the requirements in the guideline. If you feel that the guideline is not applicable to you, for example because it is outside your mandate, then explain why.

- **Details of evidence submitted by the institution.** For those guidelines that are applicable to you, list the evidence that you will be submitting, such as policies, procedures, results of surveys or links to websites that contain the evidence. Please note that the box headed ‘Examples of the types of evidence required’ describes the types of evidence that you might have, but these are examples only. It is likely that some of your evidence will be similar to these, but you may well have different evidence.

Once you have finished, you can upload the completed workbook and evidence to the ISSA Recognition portal that has been set up for you. ISSA will provide you with guidance on how to do this at the outset. You can upload the evidence in one batch or in a series of batches.

When you have uploaded all your evidence, let the evaluator know. The evaluator will read it and come back to you with any questions or requests for further information. If necessary, the evaluator will arrange a video conference and/or Skype interviews with staff, in order to gain a better understanding of your institution.

2.2.5. Good practices

If you consider that your institution has good practices and you would like the evaluator to take note of them, please complete the form at the start of the workbook and submit it to the ISSA portal with all your evidence as described above. No more than four forms should be submitted.

For your guidance, the following would be considered ‘good practices’:

- If the practice is already included in the ISSA Good practices in Social Security database and it relates to the relevant guidelines that you have applied for, it would automatically also be considered a good practice here. The evaluator will check that the given good practice is submitted under the right guideline.
- A practice that implements the structure and mechanisms given in a guideline but goes beyond the formal requirements given. The evaluator will check that the given good practice is submitted under the right guideline and implements practices in its structure and mechanisms.
- A practice that is not contained in the structure and mechanisms but adds extra value in line with the approach of the guideline. The value added may be very specific to the local context.

2.2.6. Evaluator’s conclusions and follow-up

Once the evaluators are satisfied that all the relevant information has been submitted, they will complete the workbook with their conclusions (the parts in **blue**) and send the completed workbook to you for fact-checking. You can make any comments you wish at the end of the workbook. The evaluator will then make any final changes to the workbook and formally issue it to yourselves and ISSA.

If there are any guidelines identified as non-compliant, you are required to carry out improvements to deal with the non-compliant issue(s). You will need to produce an action plan of what you are going to do within one month of the date of the report. You will then have five months to carry out the agreed actions and provide evidence to the evaluator of what you have done.