

Why PAS 24000 Falls Short of SA8000's Worker Protections

SAI does not concur with assertions that PAS 24000 certification is equivalent to SA8000®. The Italian procurement agency decisions address market access. They do not, and do not purport to, establish that the two schemes deliver the same depth of worker protection, the same audit rigor, or the same degree of confidence to the buyers, workers, and public bodies that rely on them.

The Assotic/Conforma position paper (May 2026) asserting equivalence between the two standards does not address differences in the certification scheme architecture of each—which are of central importance to most social accountability stakeholders.

There are numerous demonstrable reasons why PAS 24000 and SA8000 certification cannot be considered equivalent. PAS 24000 specifies the minimum requirements for a social management system; SA8000 is designed to support the full realization of decent work and human rights. That difference in ambition is reflected in the scheme around each standard. SA8000 requires certification bodies to meet more stringent requirements for risk assessment, worker and stakeholder engagement, auditor qualification, internal audit-firm processes, and audit duration, depth, and protocol—the controls that determine whether an audit produces high-confidence results.

The SA8000 Standard is shaped by the parties whose interests it exists to protect. Through SAI's multi-stakeholder process, workers and unions, companies and their associations at every level of the value chain, human rights experts and advocates, and government representatives all have a role in setting requirements. That process is why SA8000 covers workers' rights issues that PAS 24000 addresses only partially or not at all, such as corporate due diligence expectations, living wages, worker privacy, psychosocial risks, and more. It is also why SA8000 has been the world's pre-eminent social certification for nearly three decades, sustaining the stakeholder trust that allows a certificate to mean something to the people who rely on it. (See the table below for further detail on the substantive differences between SA8000 and PAS 24000 certification.)

As architect and steward of the SA8000 Standard and certification scheme, SAI is firmly committed to advancing worker wellbeing and to the integrity of the broader conformity assessment landscape. We are committed to pursuing meaningful alignment between the SA8000 and PAS 24000 schemes at appropriate levels — working constructively with standards developers, scheme owners, accreditation bodies, conformity assessment bodies, and other interested parties. Our objective is to reduce market confusion, strengthen the credibility and robustness of both schemes, and ensure that certification continues to serve as a genuinely reliable indicator for workers, buyers, and society.

SA8000 and PAS 24000 Scheme Comparison Table (June 2026)

Note: The similarities and differences outlined below are for illustrative purposes only and are not intended to be exhaustive.

PAS 24000 Scheme	SA8000 Scheme
Market Recognition / Credibility	
PAS 24000 accredited certification is not widely recognized globally.	SA8000 accredited certification is prominent in Italy and well-recognized globally, with SAAS-accredited certificates currently issued in 49 countries.
PAS 24000 accreditation program launched in 2025.	The SA8000 Standard, scheme, and global accreditation program have almost 30 years of recognition by a broad international stakeholder community, (including governments, inter-governmental organizations, trade unions, worker organizations, brands, suppliers, civil society organizations, etc.). The SAAS accreditation program (launched in 1998) has proven to be robust across 28 years in the global market.
Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) and Audit Rigor	
PAS 24000 competence requirements for certification auditors rely almost exclusively on CAB interpretations of generic, management system (only) auditor competence requirements.	CAB, auditor competence, and professional development requirements for the SA8000 scheme include: • Team leadership by an APSCA CSCA-level auditor • Extensive and demonstrable SA8000 and social audit-specific qualifications, experience, and mandatory, issue-focused, ongoing professional development • Quantified evaluation of audit team leadership • Periodic SA8000-relevant auditor 'calibration' • Monitoring and reporting of CAB KPIs <i>This better assures that CAB auditors understand, focus on, and can effectively evaluate the indicators and processes most pertinent to worker issues and risks within an organization.</i>

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PAS is often bundled with other audits, with minimum audit durations. This dilutes the audit team's evaluation of social effectiveness and management conformity of organizations' social accountability programs.	To preserve the necessary rigor and worker rights performance demanded by stakeholders, SA8000 requires specialized, focused, and considerably deeper audits by auditors with relevant expertise. <i>This ensures that auditor attention, overall effort, and focus on worker wellbeing is uncompromised by the objectives and requirements of other schemes. The deeper audits (for example: in PAS 24000, 251-500 persons = 3.25 days total; in SA8000, 251-500 persons = 6 days total) better facilitate multi-person (gender representative) audit teams, more sampled evidence, more interviews, increased evaluation of performance indicators to demonstrate fulfilment of decent work requirements, and more opportunity to identify shortcomings.</i>
PAS 24000 scheme requirements do not incorporate specific CAB or audit team controls to ensure that challenging and high-risk areas/topics are effectively and consistently addressed.	CAB and audit protocol requirements in the SA8000 scheme are extensive and include: • Appropriate gender balance within audit teams • Periodic auditor rotation • Team leadership provided by an APSCA CSCA-level auditor • Ongoing stakeholder engagement • Detailed employee interview protocols and sampling practices • Off-site interviews (in high-risk countries) • Specific bribery/corruption controls • Specific actions for flagrant/egregious violations • Shift pattern audit requirements • Semi-announced audits • Specific nonconformity protocols for persistent hours and wages, and now value chain, failings • Follow-up assessment reviews between audits • Specific record-keeping requirements (including photographs) <i>Detailed audit protocol requirements promote quality and integrity of the audit process, in</i>

PAS 24000 Scheme	SA8000 Scheme
	<i>accordance with stakeholder/societal expectations.</i>
Accreditation Rigor	
In PAS, criteria applied to CABs rely exclusively on generic ISO and IAF management system practices, which are developed for management system (only) assurance schemes and oriented towards standardized CAB operational practices.	In SA8000, criteria applied to CABs incorporate the same ISO and IAF practices, but also (reflecting the demands of society/stakeholders) specifically define and interpret these requirements for the purposes of assuring the quality and integrity of a social certification and audit scheme <i>Extensive tailored requirements promote CAB best practices (developed over almost 30 years of experience) over 'lowest common denominator' CAB practices.</i>
Accreditation body and accreditation auditor experience is mainly focused on non-social topics.	SAI employs a specialized and globally experienced team of accreditation auditors with decades of experience overseeing social accountability certification. The ability of SAAS auditors to evaluate the 'social issue' competence of CAB management, staff, and auditors is paramount to the credibility of the SA8000 scheme. <i>Demonstrable SAI/SAAS personnel competence improves assurance that CAB programs meet not only the letter of the requirements, but also the expectations of society/stakeholders.</i>
Origins and Objectives of the Standards Themselves	
PAS 24000:2022 is a private sector standard that has recently been locally promoted to address minimum buyer-to-supplier protections.	For almost 30 years, the SA8000 Standard has been the focal point of SAI's holistic, multi-faceted, and multi-stakeholder approach to improving workplace conditions, empowering workers, and protecting human rights. The vision and purpose of SA8000 not only fulfils, but extends far beyond, transactional risk management. <i>Rather than relying heavily on management system documentation and the absence of worker-rights infractions, SA8000:2026 demands leadership accountability, worker participation, grievance mechanisms, and</i>

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	<i>demonstrable continuous improvement. It requires organizations to proactively demonstrate risk-oriented performance with respect to worker protections. Significantly, the Standard also strengthens human rights due diligence by extending accountability for human rights performance (proportionate to risk) to an organizations' business partners (i.e. value chain).</i>
Standard Scope	
PAS 24000 covers generic management system and basic social expectations.	SA8000 specifies more comprehensively the set of social criteria that are relevant to stakeholders, including: • Living wage • Privacy/personal data • Due diligence and business relationships • Psychosocial hazards and mental well-being • Children's rights • Invasive medical/bodily procedures • Isolation and separation from family/dependents • Recruitment fees borne by workers • Public reporting and transparency