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Agreements and Arrangements

FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTING THE CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR THE
PREPARATION, ADOPTION AND APPLICATION OF STANDARDS IN THE
AGREEMENT ON TECHNICAL BARRIERS TO TRADE
(PROPOSAL IN DOCUMENTS MTN.GNG/NG8/W/71)

Communication from the ISO Central Secretariat

The purpose of this note is to review the implications of the proposed Code of Good Practice, from the standpoint of the bodies concerned within the ISO/IEC system, and notably the standardizing bodies on a regional, national or local level, including the members of the ISO information network (ISONET) as described in Annex A.

The actions involved are listed, using as a basis the text of the above proposal, and a commentary is made on the estimated feasibility and cost involved. The latter are summarized in a conclusion. At this stage it was not considered practicable to evaluate the costs for individual standardizing bodies, as these differ largely from one body to another, depending on their scopes and structures. These costs relate to the preparation of work programmes, their indexing with reference to the International Classification for Standards and their biannual publication.

1. Standardizing bodies on a national or local level

1.1 Shall notify their relevant central government authorities of the fact that they have accepted or withdrawn from the Code. The notification shall include the name and address of the body concerned and the products covered by its current and expected standardization activities (see: Code of Good Practice, item C, first para).

[Commentary: Straightforward. No problem expected. No additional funds needed.

Editorial remark: to change words "the products covered" for "the subject matter covered" since standardization activities of standardizing bodies might be wider than standardization of products.]

1.2 Shall simultaneously make the same notification to the ISO Information Centre in Geneva through the national member body of ISONET or, in the absence thereof, directly (see: Code of Good Practice, item C, second para).

[Commentary: Straightforward. No problem expected. No additional funds needed.

Editorial remark: to change everywhere in the Code the term "national member body of ISONET" for the term "national member of ISONET" which was adopted in the ISONET Constitution.]

GATT SECRETARIAT

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1.3 Shall publish, at least once every six months, in a national or, as the case may be, regional publication of standardization activities a work programme containing their name and address, the standards they are currently preparing and the standards which they have formally adopted in the preceding period. The work programme shall for each standard indicate:

- the relevant product classification,

[Commentary: It is suggested that the wording "the relevant product classification" be changed to read "the classification number relevant to the subject matter". The proposed change would be in accordance with the wording of Recommendation 2a (see: TBT/W/137, page 7). An International Classification for Standards is being developed within an existing ISO consultative group and could be used for this purpose.]

- the stage attained in the standard's development, and

[Commentary: The standards development stage matrix used in the IEC/ISO Directives for the technical work is given in Annex B, for information.]

- references of any standards taken as a basis (see: Code of Good Practice, item I).

[Commentary to 1.3 in general: No problems of technical feasibility expected. Cost would have to be assessed by individual standardizing bodies involved, as it would be proportional to their volume of work.]

1.4 Shall transmit their work programmes, no later than at the time of the publication, to the ISO Information Centre in Geneva through the national member body of ISONET or, in the absence thereof, directly (see: Code of Good Practice).

[Commentary: The EEC proposal asks for transmission of the published work programmes to the ISO Information Centre in Geneva; this is feasible but not needed by the ISO Central Secretariat since ISO is organized in a different way for monitoring work progress for its own purpose. Notification of the availability of work programmes would therefore be sufficient. Cost involved would depend on the acceptance or not of this ISO comment; the EEC proposal as it now stands could involve moderate costs at national level for adjusting the presentation of the work programmes of the standardizing bodies adhering to the Code, and an estimated cost in the order of three man-months for the ISO Central Secretariat.]

1.5 Shall provide, on the request of any interested party in a Party to the GATT Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, a copy of a draft standard which they submitted to public enquiry (such copies shall be sent by speedy means of delivery at the start of the public enquiry or, if the request has been received after the start but before the end of the public enquiry, as promptly as possible), a copy of their most recent work programme or of a standard which they produced.

Standardizing bodies shall either send copies themselves or have them sent by another body with which they have a contractual arrangement for this purpose. For this service a reasonable fee may be charged, which shall, apart from the real cost of delivery, be the same for foreign and domestic parties (see: Code of Good Practice, items K and N).

[Commentary: No feasibility problems expected. Cost/benefits to be assessed by the standardizing bodies concerned.]

2. Standardizing bodies on a regional level

2.1 Shall notify the central government authorities of their members or directly the GATT secretariat of the fact that they have accepted or withdrawn from the Code. The notification shall include the name and address of the body concerned and the products covered by its current and expected standardization activities (see: Code of Good Practice, item C, first para.).

2.2 Shall simultaneously make the same notification to the ISO Information Centre in Geneva through an international affiliate of ISONET or through one or more national member bodies of ISONET or, in the absence of both, directly (see: Code of Good Practice, item C, second para.).

2.3 (The same as item 1.3)

2.4 Shall transmit their work programmes, no later than at the time of the publication, to the ISO Information Centre in Geneva through an international affiliate of ISONET or through one or more national member bodies of ISONET or, in the absence of either, directly (see: Code of Good Practice, item I).

2.5 (The same as item 1.5)

[Commentary: The same as for section 1.]

3. ISONET national members and international affiliates

3.1 Shall transmit to the ISO Information Centre in Geneva the notifications of standardizing bodies that have accepted or withdrawn from the Code and their work programmes containing the names and addresses where these can be obtained (see: Code of Good Practice, items C and I).

[Commentary: Cost for the management of notifications and work programmes as well as answering enquiries would depend on national standardization structure. See also commentary on 1.4, concerning the sending of work programmes.]

4. ISO Information Centre in Geneva

4.1 Shall regularly publish in a publication available at least to ISONET member bodies, the names and addresses of standardizing bodies that have accepted or withdrawn from the Code and the names and addresses of standardizing bodies from which work programmes have been received since the last publication (see: Recommendation of the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade, item 3).

[Commentary: The estimated cost of preparing, issuing and updating a publication containing the information requested above could range from Sw F 50,000 to 100,000 depending on the number of entries and print runs. A part of the cost could be covered by a subscription fee. See also commentary on 1.4 concerning the sending of work programmes.]

CONCLUSIONS

It would seem that the obligations foreseen in the proposed Code of Good Practice could be met without significant technical obstacles by the partners of the ISO/IEC system.

The economic aspects of the proposal, in particular the financial consequences for standardizing bodies adhering to the Code of Good Practice, would have to be studied more thoroughly in due course. The costs incurred by standardizing bodies adhering to the Code for adjusting and publishing their work programmes would depend on their respective structures and volume of work and would have to be assessed by them.

As for the costs to be incurred by the ISO Central Secretariat's Information Centre in Geneva, these would relate to:

- speeding up the finalization of the International Classification for Standards, in progress within an ISO consultative group and referred to in item 1.3 above (tentative estimate: two man-months for secretariat work). The total time for developing the harmonized classification would depend mainly of the consensus building process in the ISO consultative group, which is difficult to evaluate, and of the approval procedure;
- preparing, publishing and updating the publication giving the names and addresses of standardizing bodies adhering to the Code of standardizing bodies from which work programmes are available, as referred to in item 4.1 (could be in the order of Sw F 50,000 to 100,000 depending on the number of entries);

- management of the notifications and, if the present proposal by the European Economic Community is adopted, handling of the work programmes provided by standardizing bodies (yearly estimate: three man-months). In this connection the ISO Central Secretariat would consider sufficient that the availability of work programmes be simply notified, without requiring that the work programmes themselves be forwarded to the ISO Information Centre in Geneva (see commentary on item 1.4).

The ISO Central Secretariat would be glad to refine this preliminary study in due course.

ANNEX A

Extract from the ISONET Directory

ISONET
Directory

Introduction

ISONET - the ISO Information Network - is an agreement between standardizing bodies to combine their efforts in order to make information on standards, technical regulations and related matters readily available whenever and wherever it is required.

ISONET depends on the principle that in each country there is a body, usually the ISO member body, with a wide knowledge of standardizing and regulatory activities in the country concerned. As a party to ISONET it agrees to expand this knowledge to the maximum and to share its experience and exchange information as required with similar bodies in other countries.

ISONET is therefore a network comprising the national standards information centres and the links between them. It includes the ISO Information Centre in Geneva which has a responsibility for international standardizing documents similar to the national responsibility for national documents.

Parties to the agreement

The parties to the agreement are known as the members of ISONET. A national member of ISONET is either the ISO member body (or correspondent member) or another competent body nominated by the ISO member. A country may be represented in ISONET by one and only one national member.

National members of ISONET may nominate as associate members other organizations in their own countries when they consider that this would be helpful to them in achieving the aims of ISONET. Actions taken by an associate member within the framework of ISONET remain the responsibility of the national member.

A third type of member of ISONET is the international affiliate; this is an international or a regional body with an interest in ISONET which has joined by invitation of the Secretary-General of ISO.

The full details of the duties, rights and privileges of the various types of members of ISONET are given in a booklet which includes the ISONET Constitution and the Conditions for participation in ISONET.

INFCO

INFCO is the Committee on information of the ISO Council. It is also the General Assembly of ISONET. The national members of ISONET constitute the participating membership of INFCO while associate members, international affiliates and ISO member bodies which are not members of ISONET may be associated with INFCO as observers.

The main task of INFCO is to develop ISONET and promote its implementation. Towards this end it has developed procedures and practices for use by standards information centres in their own activities and in exchanges with others.

The terms of reference of INFCO are set out in full in the ISO Memento and some of the results of its work appear in the ISONET Guide, the ISONET Manual and the ISONET Directory.

The ISONET Management Board

The ISONET Management Board is the chief executive organ of ISONET. The Board consists of nine members and a chairman appointed by INFCO subject to confirmation by ISO Council. The Board is responsible for administrative, procedural and accounting matters, and for the implementation of policy decisions.

The ISONET Directory

The ISONET Directory lists all information centres operating within ISONET with details of how they may be contacted, the types of information they are able to provide and the information processing means which they employ. The Directory also includes, where relevant, the names and addresses of the enquiry points established under the GATT Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, also known as the Standards Code.

The ISONET Directory therefore constitutes a complete worldwide-guide to the main sources of information on standards, technical regulations, certification systems and related matters: its main purpose is to help ISONET members needing to establish contact with other members.

Codes used in this Directory

TP = Telephone
TF = Telefax
TX = Telex
TG = Telegrams

The symbols for languages in the entries are in accordance with International Standard ISO 639 : 1988.

Access to the information

Enquires from national organizations including government departments, commerce and industry, universities, or from individuals should be addressed in the first place to the national member of ISONET for the country of the enquirer. International governmental and non-governmental organizations should address their enquiries to the ISO Information Centre which is located in the ISO Central Secretariat in Geneva (see page 5).

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ANNEX B

Extract from the IEC/ISO Directives, part 1

ANNEX H (normative)

Matrix presentation of project stages

To allow the monitoring of project development in a systematic way, the following table shows a two-digit representation of the principal steps (stages/sub-stages) involved. A project is registered as having reached each particular step when the action or decision indicated at that point has been taken.

NOTES

1. The following third digits (sub-sub-stages) may be used, where necessary, to indicate progress between two sub-stages:

- .1 : ballot closed
- .5 : document in preparation
- .6 : document received by TC or SC secretariat for action
- .7 : document sent to office of CEO for action
- .8 : document received by office of CEO

2. Steps 0.4, 0.5, 0.6, 0.8 and 1.9 are defined in the table for internal monitoring purposes by TC or SC secretariats if so desired. They are supplementary to the steps defined elsewhere in this part of the IEC/ISO Directives.

SUB-STAGE	Action by office of CEO	Approval procedure initiated	Comments/ voting summary circulated	Action on voting results	Receipt for further action	Approval procedure initiated	Comments/ voting summary circulated	Action on voting results	Approved for higher stage	Referral/ revision/ cancellation
STAGE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Preliminary stage (see note 2 opposite)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
					0.4 Proposal for new project received	0.5 Proposal for new project under review	0.6 Review summary circulated		0.8 Approval to ballot proposal for new project	
Proposal stage	1.0 Proposal for new project registered	1.1 New project ballot initiated	1.2 Voting summary circulated						1.8 New project approved	1.9 Proposal returned to submitter for further definition (See note 2 opposite)
Preparatory stage	2.0 Project registered in work programme	2.1 Working draft (WD) study initiated	2.2 Comments summary circulated						2.8 WD approved for registration as CD	
Committee stage	3.0 Committee draft (CD) registered	3.1 CD study/ballot initiated	3.2 Comments/ voting summary circulated						3.8 CD approved for registration as DIS	

SUB-STAGE	Action by office of CEO	Approval procedure initiated	Comments/ voting summary circulated	Action on voting results	Receipt for further action	Approval procedure initiated	Comments/ voting summary circulated	Action on voting results	Approved for higher stage	Referral/ revision/ cancellation
STAGE	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Approval stage	4	4.0 DIS registered	4.1 DIS ballot initiated	4.2 Voting summary dispatched [Next step: 4.3, 4.8 or 4.9]	4.3 Full report circulated in case of decision for 2 months ballot	4.4 Amended draft received at office of CEO	4.5 DIS ballot initiated	4.6 Voting summary dispatched [Next step: 4.8 or 4.9]	4.8 Full report circulated and DIS approved for publication as International Standard	4.9 DIS referred back to TC or SC
		----- 6 months ballot procedure								
Publication stage	5	5.0 International Standard under publication	5.2 Proof sent to TC or SC secretariat	5.3 International Standard published	5.4 International Standard under review		5.5 International Standard under periodical review	5.6 Review summary dispatched	5.7 International Standard confirmed	5.9 International Standard under revision
(Reserved for future use)	6									
(Reserved for future use)	7									
(Reserved for future use)	8									
Withdrawal	9	9.0 Withdrawal of International Standard proposed by TC or SC	9.1 Withdrawal ballot initiated	9.2 Voting summary dispatched	9.3 New project rejected or project deleted	9.4 New project rejected or project deleted		9.7 International Standard replaced by new edition	9.8 International Standard replaced by another International Standard	9.9 International Standard withdrawn without being replaced