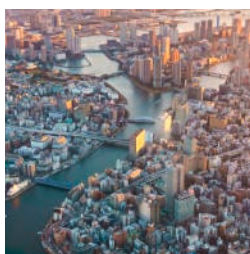
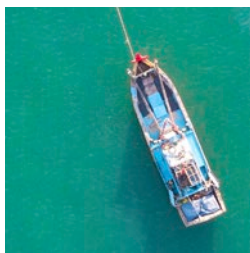
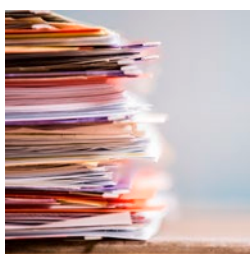




policy

# ISO Global relevance **policy**





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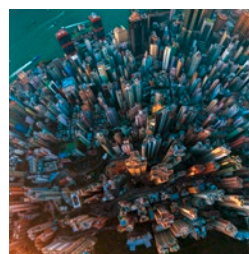
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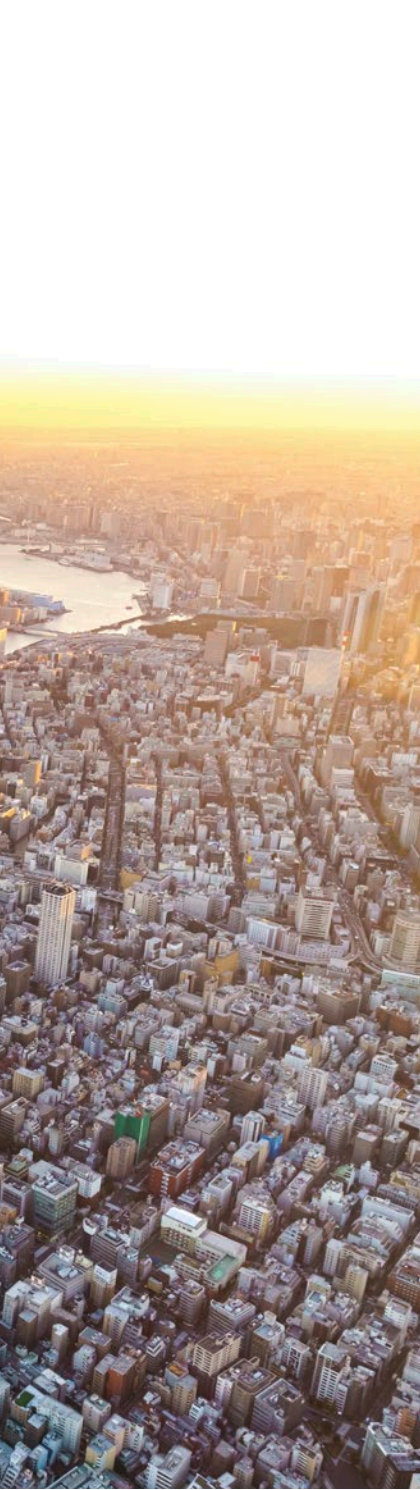
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# ISO Global Relevance Policy

ISO defines global relevance as :

Required characteristic of an International Standard that it can be used/ implemented as broadly as possible by affected industries and other stakeholders in markets around the world.

(ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1  
Consolidated ISO Supplement –  
Procedures specific to ISO, Annex S)

**The formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the subsequent adoption of the WTO Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement (WTO/TBT), placed an obligation on ISO to ensure that the International Standards it develops, adopts and publishes are globally relevant.**

Annex 4, paragraph 10, of the Second Triennial Review of the WTO/TBT lists the criteria that a globally relevant standard should meet:

- Effectively respond to regulatory and market needs (in the global marketplace)
- Respond to scientific and technical development in various countries
- Not distort the market
- Have no adverse effects on fair competition
- Not stifle innovation and technological development
- Not give preference to characteristics or requirements of specific countries or regions when different needs or interests exist in other countries or regions
- Be performance based as opposed to design prescriptive

Hence the development and adoption of an International Standard that fails to meet these requirements is open to being challenged as creating a barrier to free trade.

**Noting the need to provide fuller advice to committees on global relevance, the ISO/TMB have agreed on a set of principles that define the ISO Global Relevance Policy.**

## The ISO Global Relevance Policy details principles consistent with the WTO principles :

1. The status and meaning of an International Standard shall be respected.
2. The commitment to participate in the development of and the feasibility of preparing International Standards shall be demonstrated at the outset of a standards development project.
3. Preference shall be given to preparing performance rather than prescriptive standards.
4. Given existing and legitimate market differences, an International Standard may pass through an evolutionary process, with the ultimate objective being to publish, at a later point, an International Standard that presents one unique international solution in all of its provisions.
5. Essential differences consistent with Annex 3 to the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade can be included in International Standards, but specific rules shall be applied if a committee wishes to introduce such differences and special authorization needs to be given by the TMB in instances not covered by these rules.
6. Committees can only ensure the global relevance of the International Standards they produce if they are aware of all the factors that may affect a particular standard's global relevance.

The ISO Global Relevance Policy may also be found in the **ISO/IEC Directives Part 1, Consolidated ISO Supplement – Procedures specific to ISO, Annex SM**

Each principle is detailed in the next section, and additional material developed by the TMB, including further guidance on how to implement the global relevance principles, an explanation of ‘essential differences’ and key messages on the global relevance policy for technical committee leaders and participants is in Annex.









# ISO Global Relevance Principles

## 1. The status and meaning of an International Standard shall be respected.

Any International Standard shall respect the **definition** and shall to the extent possible represent a unique international solution. In cases where unique international solutions are not possible for specific provisions of an International Standard at the current time due to legitimate market, societal and essential differences, International Standards may present options to accommodate these differences where justified.

## 2. The commitment to participate in the development of and the feasibility of preparing International Standards shall be demonstrated at the outset of a standards development project.

It is recognized that in some instances various solutions exist to meet unique aspects of the local markets in different regions and countries. With globalization and the unification of markets, these market differences should be minimized over time and evolve into one global market.

Simply projecting one solution as the International Standard that accommodates one market (but not others) will not force markets to evolve and coalesce. In such cases, the markets and their related industries will look elsewhere for standards that better accommodate their needs, and ISO will lose its relevance for those markets and industries. Rather than force such a situation, ISO committees should ascertain at the outset of a project whether :

- a globally relevant International Standard presenting one unique international solution in all of its provisions is feasible
- an International Standard is feasible that presents options in specific provisions to accommodate existing and legitimate market differences where justified, or
- the preparation of a globally relevant International Standard is not feasible and work should not be undertaken in such circumstances.

Additional practical guidance for committee leaders and delegates/experts may be found in the ISO/TMB's Global Relevance Implementation Guidance document (see **Annex 1**).

### **3. Preference shall be given to preparing performance rather than prescriptive standards.**

Please note the following :

#### **Annex 3 of the WTO/TBT Agreement**

“I. Wherever appropriate, the standardizing body shall specify standards based on product requirements in terms of performance rather than design or descriptive characteristics.”

#### **ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2,**

#### **Clause 5.4 Performance principle (Excerpt)**

“Whenever possible, requirements shall be expressed in terms of performance rather than design or descriptive characteristics. This principle allows maximum freedom for technical development and reduces the risk of undesirable market impacts (e.g. limiting development of innovative solutions).”

Given these quotations, the use of the performance-based approach is widely recognized as supporting the development of globally relevant ISO standards. In the case of design-based standards, the freedom for further technical innovation is most limited, while performance-based standards

provide for maximum freedom for further innovation. However, in practice, there may be cases where inclusion of design requirements for some provisions within a performance-based standard is appropriate. There may also be other cases where development of a completely design-based standard may be appropriate and will result in a globally relevant ISO standard.

Thus, which approach is most appropriate depends on the technical matter in question.

Additional practical guidance for committee leaders and delegates/experts may be found in the ISO/TMB's Global Relevance Implementation Guidance document (see **Annex 1**).



Wherever appropriate, the standardizing body shall specify standards based on product requirements in terms of performance rather than design or descriptive characteristics.



**4. Given existing and legitimate market differences, an International Standard may pass through an evolutionary process, with the ultimate objective being to publish, at a later point, an International Standard that presents one unique international solution in all of its provisions.**

Under this principle, a committee may wish to consider how it addresses current and potentially changeable differences in markets (based on factors such as legislation, economies, social conditions, trade patterns, market needs, scientific theories, design philosophies, etc.) in the ISO deliverables it produces.

Additional practical guidance for committee leaders and delegates/experts may be found in the ISO/TMB's Global Relevance Implementation Guidance document (see **Annex 1**).

**5. Essential differences consistent with Annex 3 to the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade can be included in International Standards, but specific rules shall be applied if a committee wishes to introduce such differences and special authorization needs to be given by the TMB in instances not covered by these rules.**

Under this principle, a committee may wish to consider how it addresses essential differences in markets around the world, that is, factors that are not expected to change over time, such as imbedded technological infrastructures, climatic, geographical or anthropological differences.

Additional practical guidance for committee leaders and delegates/experts may be found in the ISO/TMB's Implementation of Essential Differences in ISO Standards guidance document (see **Annex 2**).

**6. Committees can only ensure the global relevance of the International Standards they produce if they are aware of all the factors that may affect a particular standard's global relevance.**

Additional practical guidance for committee leaders and delegates/experts may be found in the ISO/TMB's Global Relevance Implementation Guidance document (see **Annex 1**).



An International Standard may pass through an evolutionary process, with the ultimate objective being to publish an International Standard that presents [...] one unique international solution in all of its provisions.







## ANNEX 1

# ISO/TMB implementation guidance

### Global relevance of ISO technical work and publications

The following information is intended to provide practical and easy-to-understand guidance to ISO committee leaders as well as ISO national body delegates and experts to assist in their implementation of the concept of Global Relevance in the development of ISO International Standards.

The information below is organized by the 6 principles of the 'ISO Global Relevance Policy'.

Note: The Global Relevance policy is incorporated in the **ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1 Consolidated ISO Supplement – Procedures specific to ISO, Annex SM**

## **Why is the global relevance of ISO International Standards important?**

For many years, there has been a general philosophy that an ISO International Standard represents a consensus of those who participated in its development. As a result, some ISO International Standards have been published which respond only to particular regional requirements while other countries and regions continue to use the standards that have been traditionally followed in those countries and regions. Moreover, in some instances, ISO International Standards have been published that are not appropriate for application in some countries.

## **Can the use of ISO Standards differ in differing markets, and if so, how does this relate to the global relevance of ISO International Standards?**

It is important to recognize that the way ISO International Standards are used in various markets can vary considerably. In some countries, the practice is to adopt suitable ISO International Standards as national standards. Within Europe, ISO International Standards that are approved as European Standards are not only adopted as national standards by the CEN members, but all conflicting national standards are withdrawn. In other countries and regions, ISO International Standards can be used without national adoption and can co-exist with other national and domestic standards. In these cases, the market players choose which standards to use in any particular context. In some economies in transition, where “standards” have traditionally enjoyed the status of technical regulations, it has been agreed that ISO International Standards are acceptable alternatives to those technical regulations.

The way that an ISO International Standard will be used in a particular market, country or region is not a reason to give less weight or consideration to the views of that market, country or region. The aim of the ISO/TMB is to ensure the development of globally relevant ISO International Standards that can be used in any market, country or region.

**PRINCIPLE 1:**

**The status and meaning of an International Standard shall be respected**

**Is it possible to allow for options to be presented in ISO International Standards and other deliverables to support their global relevance?**

Yes, the use of options in ISO International Standards to address market and essential differences is possible, and further implementation guidance related to use of these options is presented later in this document.



The use of options in ISO International Standards to address market and essential differences is possible.



## Could the introduction of options in an ISO International Standard to support global relevance actually undermine commitments to international standardization and the goal of “one standard, one test, accepted worldwide”?

The ISO/TMB’s global relevance principle 1 states that “The status and meaning of an International Standard shall be respected”. Therefore, the ISO/TMB has reconfirmed that any ISO International Standard shall to the extent possible represent a unique international solution. However, in reality, the desirable goal of “One standard, one test, accepted worldwide” is only achievable if a further element exists as a precursor: one global market or requirement. In cases where unique international solutions are not possible for specific provisions of an ISO International Standard at the current time due to legitimate market, societal and essential differences, ISO International Standards may present options to accommodate these differences where justified. It is recognized that in some instances various solutions exist to meet unique aspects of the local markets in different regions

and countries. With globalization and the unification of markets, these differences should be minimized over time and evolve into one global market. Simply projecting one solution that accommodates one area (but not others) as the ISO International Standard will not force evolution and coalescence. In such cases, affected parties will look elsewhere for standards that better accommodate their needs, and ISO will lose its relevance for those parties.

“An International  
Standard  
projecting one  
solution that  
accommodates  
one market.

## **PRINCIPLE 2:**

**The commitment to participate in the development of and the feasibility of preparing International Standards shall be demonstrated at the outset of a standards development project.**

### **When should an ISO committee assess whether it is feasible and whether the ISO committee is committed to developing a globally relevant ISO International Standard?**

The ISO/TMB's global relevance principle 2 states that: "The commitment to participate in the development of and the feasibility of preparing International Standards shall be demonstrated at the outset of a standards development project." Therefore, when voting on new work item proposals, ISO committees should make these assessments and apply them in decisions on whether or not the projects go forward. It is understandable that ISO committees wish to produce documents; in fact, that is why such committees exist and they do wish to be seen as productive. However, rather

than force a situation that results in an ISO International Standard projecting one solution that accommodates one market (but not others), ISO committees must take serious decisions at the outset of a project whether:

1. a globally relevant ISO International Standard presenting one unique international solution in all of its provisions is feasible
2. an ISO International Standard is feasible that presents options in specific provisions to accommodate existing and legitimate market, societal and essential differences where justified
3. preparation of a globally relevant ISO International Standard is not feasible and work should not be undertaken in such circumstances.

For existing standards, all ISO committees shall consider their global relevance at the next systematic review of each standard and make appropriate revisions to ensure global relevance.

## What practical guidance exists to assist ISO committees and ISO member bodies to assess feasibility and commitment to global relevance at the outset of a project?

The ISO/TMB Directives Maintenance Team reviewed and revised the ISO form related to new work item proposals (ISO Form 4 – New Work Item Proposal) as well as the acceptance criteria for new work item proposals that are presented in **Clause 2.3.5** of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. This supports proposers and ISO member bodies voting on such proposals to better focus on global relevance concerns as they address new work item proposals, and it supports the ISO committee moving forward when feasibility and commitment to global relevance is documented.

The revised new work item proposal forms make it explicit that:

- Proposers shall to the extent possible identify in their proposals any factors which may impact the feasibility of reaching agreement on an ISO International Standard that is globally relevant;
- The proposal should contain information to explain on strong

commitment to produce a globally relevance standard will be accomplished where there are several regional or national standards in existence. Ideally, the proposal should include comment from the regional or national standards bodies with relevant standards on the proposal and any significant issues that would prevent consensus on an International Standard

- Member bodies, by voting approval on a new work item proposal understand they are confirming that:
  1. they agree there is a market need for an ISO International Standard on the proposed subject, and
  2. they are aware of no factors which prevent the development of a globally relevant ISO International Standard.

For systematic reviews/revisions of existing standards, a report should be provided that outlines progress towards one international standard since the last review and how further progress might be achieved. Regional and national standards bodies should identify any relevant standards or issues that would prevent consensus on an international

standard. The ISO/TMB should consider and take appropriate action on any cases that show no progress being made toward one international standard.

The objective is to consider whether global relevance might be achieved within a reasonable period (say 5-10 years depending on review period) or whether the international standard is of such value that its withdrawal would materially harm trade and the other objectives of global relevance (in other words are we better off having something that is accepted widely but not universally, rather than withdrawing the international standard).

The requirement to achieve global relevance means that committee officers need to exercise considerable judgment and that the process cannot simply rely on the counting of votes.

Furthermore, proposers and committees should take advantage of the option to propose preliminary work items, registered at stage 0, in order to work within the committee to evaluate the feasibility of global relevance and to identify stakeholders and ensure their commitment to participate prior to formal submittal and voting on a new work item proposal.

When evaluating proposals for new work, committees shall identify the stakeholders involved and shall ensure their commitment to participate in the development of an ISO International Standard.

When the NP approval criteria have been met, and no potential impediments to the achievement of global relevance have been identified, a new work item may be registered in the program of work of the committee. If the approval criteria are met, but a number of factors that may inhibit the achievement of global relevance have been identified, a further feasibility study shall be carried out by those parties who bring forward such objections.

If the study shows that the factors in question can be addressed, for example, through the inclusion of options in the ISO International Standard, then the new work item may be registered in the work program of the committee and no further new work item proposal vote is needed. If on the contrary, the feasibility study shows that there are irreconcilable obstacles to the preparation of a globally relevant ISO International Standard, then the new work item proposal shall be considered to have failed.

In cases of doubt, or if a P-member of a committee believes that a committee has taken decisions which will render a particular ISO publication inappropriate for use in certain markets, and this concern cannot be resolved within the committee, the ISO Technical Management Board may be asked to review the details of these cases in order to provide advice/direction to the committee concerned.

### **PRINCIPLE 3:**

**Preference shall be given to preparing performance rather than prescriptive standards.**

### **What additional practical implementation guidance exists related to the development of performance standards?**

Requirements for a product should be specified in terms of the performance requirements needed to ensure fitness for purpose rather than specifying the design, materials, construction etc. that will guarantee the performance of the product.

In some instances, such an approach may be the only realistic way of achieving international standardization. For example, in a number of fields, it has been recognized that, because of long-standing design traditions and philosophies, it will not be possible to harmonize existing national and regional design codes to produce an internationally accepted design code. In such cases, performance standards have been or are being developed and the national and regional codes are considered to be “deemed-to-satisfy”



methods of meeting the performance requirements of the International standard.

When the performance principle is adopted, care is necessary to ensure that important features are not inadvertently omitted from the performance requirements.

In the case of materials, if it is impossible to determine the necessary performance characteristics, the material may be specified but preferably with inclusion of the words “or other material or product proved to be equally suitable”.

Requirements concerning the manufacturing process shall usually be omitted in favour of tests to be made on the final product. There are, nevertheless, some fields in which reference to the manufacturing process is needed (for example, hot rolling, extrusion) or even in which an inspection of the manufacturing process is necessary (for example, pressure vessels).

#### **PRINCIPLE 4:**

**Given existing and legitimate market differences, an International Standard may pass through an evolutionary process, with the ultimate objective being to publish, at a later point, an International Standard that presents one unique international solution in all of its provisions.**

**How does the ISO/TMB define market differences that can be reflected in ISO deliverables when there is an expectation to evolve to one international solution in the future?**

The ISO/TMB defines market differences as those current and potentially changeable differences in markets that are based on factors such as legislation, economies, social conditions, trade patterns, market needs, scientific theories, and design philosophies.



An International Standard may pass through an evolutionary process.

**May an ISO committee produce an ISO deliverable that recognizes regional and national market differences and the regional or national standards that address those differences?**

Yes, a committee may wish to publish an ISO deliverable that relates regional or national distinctive aspects to respective regional or national standards that address those aspects, thereby “cataloguing” those differences and standards. This approach does not merit publication as International Standard and should be pursued as an ISO Technical Specification (TS) or ISO Publicly available specification (PAS) as an interim step to understand differences in the evolution toward an International Standard providing one unique international solution.

**May an ISO committee develop a performance-based ISO International Standard supported by regional or national standards, such that if a design is carried out using a national or regional standard, the design may be deemed to satisfy the performance requirements of the international standard?**

Yes. Where an International Standard for a global market is not achievable from the outset, a committee may wish to publish a performance-based International Standard supported by regional or national standards. If a design is carried out using a national or regional standard supporting such an International Standard, the design may be deemed to satisfy the performance requirements of the International Standard. One could generalize the issue by noting that the principle of verifiability means that every performance requirement has to be testable and, in particular, countries and regions may use their own national and regional standards to do the testing. Provided the results are considered to be equivalent, the fact that the test

methods may be different should not be an issue.

Under this approach, the concerned committee must ensure the International Standard does provide performance-based requirements and cannot be regarded as an “empty shell”. International Standards developed under this approach will support technical innovation by not imposing specific design solutions on the manufacturers, but will leave the market open to different possible solutions. Over time, it may be expected that one solution will emerge as the global solution to the set of performance requirements. In this way, this approach would contribute to an ongoing effort and commitment by the committee to narrow the differences and work towards one International Standard providing one unique international solution.

**It has been established that an ISO International Standard may present options for specific provisions due to market differences around the world. Is there any practical implementation guidance available for ISO committees on how to pursue this?**

Yes. However, it is the ISO/TMB’s expectation that international agreement on as many of the ISO International Standard’s provisions as possible would be captured in the form of performance-based requirements. When the committee agrees that options (e.g. different classes ; tests) need to be presented for specific provisions of the International Standard, the number of options should be as few as possible and constitute only a minority of the requirements in an ISO International Standard.

Such options should however be limited to the conditions set out in the policy statement and an International Standard should not be developed without there being a specific consensus about the main points to be included. The intent is to capture and accommodate market dynamics, not regional or national differences. As a market may cross borders and

encompass a region or a number of countries, consolidation of market dynamics is desirable to reduce redundancy in the document and confusion in the use of it.

The options to address different market dynamics may take the form of:

- parallel normative clauses in the main body text
- parallel clauses in normative annexes
- parallel parts (with each part representing a specific market)

Whichever form the options take, the committee will ensure that all options are treated equally.

Over time, it may be expected that markets will evolve and one global market will be established. In this way, this approach would contribute to an ongoing effort and commitment by the committee to work towards one International Standard providing one unique international solution.

## **Is it possible to publish ISO deliverables reflecting competing national and regional solutions?**

When there is clear commitment to harmonize competing national and regional solutions towards one International Standard, committees may also consider publication of competing national and regional solutions as Technical Specifications (TS) or Publicly Available Specifications (PAS). This should only proceed when there is ongoing effort and commitment by the committee to work towards one International Standard providing one unique international solution.

**PRINCIPLE 5:**  
**Essential differences consistent with Annex 3 to the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade can be included in International Standards, but specific rules shall be applied if a committee wishes to introduce such differences and special authorization needs to be given by the TMB in instances not covered by these rules.**

### **How may essential differences be implemented in ISO International Standards?**

The ISO/TMB Global Relevance Principle 5 states: “Essential differences consistent with Annex 3 to the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade can be included in International Standards, but specific rules shall be applied if a committee wishes to introduce such differences and special authorization needs to be given by the TMB in instances not covered by these rules.” Under this principle, a committee may wish to consider how it addresses essential differences in markets around the world, that is, differences that are not expected to change over time, such as imbedded

technological infrastructures, climatic, geographical or anthropological differences. Please see Annex 2 for specific implementation procedures regarding the inclusion of essential differences in ISO standards.

**PRINCIPLE 6:**  
**Committees can only ensure the global relevance of the International Standards they produce if they are aware of all the factors that may affect a particular standard’s global relevance.**

### **What has been done, is being pursued or can be done so that committees can be aware of all the factors that may affect a particular standard’s global relevance?**

The participation of all relevant ISO member bodies is seen as a major factor in supporting global relevance. However, many developing countries especially have difficulty acquiring the capability, expertise and resources to participate, even when an ISO committee’s work is important to their national commercial interests. The ISO Council has approved a comprehensive report



and set of recommendations to enhance the participation of developing countries in ISO technical work. The specific projects recommended in this report have been and are still being pursued within the ISO system.

The ISO/TMB has developed and issued guidance for twinning arrangements in ISO technical work so that the needs of ISO member bodies wanting to build their standards development capacities can be taken into account during the ISO standards development process.

All member bodies should take the opportunity of DIS voting to submit votes and comments on standards relevant to their national economies to help committees ensure their global relevance.

It is recognized that in some instances, impediments to the implementation of an ISO International Standard by a country or region will only be recognized during the process for adoption of the International Standard as a national or regional standard. To cater for such cases, the first systematic review of any ISO International Standard should be carried out among all ISO member bodies no later than five years after its publication. The purpose

of this review is inter alia to receive feedback from the member bodies as to whether an ISO International Standard is being used in their country and if so whether it has been found necessary to modify the ISO International Standard. All such modifications will be referred back to the responsible committee so that it can determine what course of action needs to be taken to improve the global relevance of the next edition of the ISO International Standard. For example, during a conference several years ago, it was reported that a number of ISO International Standards dealing with ergonomics were not suitable for use in Southeast Asia because the ISO International Standards were based on anthropometric parameters appropriate to the populations in Europe and North America but not appropriate to the populations in Southeast Asia.

While experts from certain countries that use the ISO standards or the related products may not participate for any number of reasons, it could be expected that the participating committee leaders, delegates and experts should be aware of the specific market needs of non-participating countries. Certainly, manufacturers of products

are very aware of their market needs, in all markets where they sell their products. Therefore, representatives of these manufacturers that do participate as leaders, delegates and experts have a particular responsibility and perhaps even an ethical duty under the ISO Code of Ethics to bring this knowledge into the process.

Information on the specific needs of markets should be documented in the sections of a technical committee's business plan on description of the market environment, objectives of the committee and strategies to address the objectives, and risk assessment or consideration of factors affecting the completion of the committee's standards or their implementation and adoption world-wide. This information captured in the committee's business plan will be valuable to guide future standards development efforts.



The participation of all relevant ISO member bodies is seen as a major factor in supporting global relevance.





## ANNEX 2

# Implementation of essential differences in ISO Standards

### 1. General

Essential differences, based on factors that are not expected to change over time, such as imbedded technological infrastructures, climatic, geographical, ergonomic or anthropological differences, may be included in the normative elements of an International Standard.

NOTE: Alternative product sizes can be included in an International Standard in accordance with the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2, 2018, clause 5.8.

The meaning of essential differences in requirements does not imply different side-by-side standards and the procedure is to be applied only in those cases where the TC/SC agrees on the achievement of a substantial degree of harmonization with most of the other requirements in the ISO existing and under development standards. As a general rule, essential differences shall be specified in the context of the specific conditions that make them necessary (e.g. in countries in which the electricity supply is 60 Hz, in regions in which the average daytime temperature is less than  $x^{\circ}\text{C}$ , in tropical countries etc.), rather than making specific provisions for particular countries.

## **2. Proposing the inclusion of essential differences in ISO standards**

All proposals to reflect essential differences in International Standards must be requested by a P member of the concerned committee, and this request must be presented to the P members of the committee for approval.

If a P member is not pleased with the decision of the committee on including the requested essential difference, the ISO appeal procedure will apply (ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1, Clause 5).

Each proposal for essential differences in requirements, including its technical and market justification, shall be submitted at the earliest possible stage (NWIP) and at the latest at the CD stage, for inclusion in the DIS.

## **3. Voting on DIS or FDIS**

When voting on a DIS or FDIS containing essential differences in requirements in the normative part of the standard, ISO members shall not take the inclusion itself of such differences as the sole reason for a negative vote. All negative votes related to essential differences in requirements, at any stage (NWIP, DIS, FDIS), must be accompanied by a technical /market justification.

## **4. Revisions of existing ISO standards**

For a revision of an existing standard a proposal for including essential differences, with justification, shall be sent by a P member to the relevant TC/SC Secretary, who will then present this request to the P members of the committee for consideration.





As a general rule, essential differences shall be specified in the context of the specific conditions that make them necessary.





## ANNEX 3

# Key messages for committee leaders and participants

### ISO's Global Relevance Policy is vital to ISO's international credibility.

The WTO/TBT Committee has detailed the following criteria for a globally relevant standard should:

- Effectively respond to regulatory and market needs (in the global marketplace)
- Respond to scientific and technical developments in various countries
- Not distort the market
- Have no adverse effects on fair competition
- Not stifle innovation and technological development
- Not give preference to characteristics or requirements of specific countries or regions when different needs or interests exist in other countries or regions
- Be performance based as opposed to design prescriptive

The development and adoption of an ISO International Standard that fails to meet these requirements is open to being challenged as creating a barrier to free trade. As a result, the ISO Technical Management Board developed ISO's Global Relevance policy and related implementation guidance to assist committees in their work.

### **First and foremost, recognize the ultimate goal of producing a globally relevant International Standard.**

Any International Standard shall to the extent possible represent a unique international solution. In cases where unique international solutions are not possible for specific provisions of an International Standard at the current time due to legitimate market, societal and essential differences, International Standards may present options, in a limited number, to accommodate these differences where justified.

### **Understand the distinctions between market differences and essential differences.**

Market differences result from those factors affecting international

consensus that are regarded as potentially changeable (such as legislation, economies, social conditions, trade patterns, market needs, scientific theories, design philosophies, etc.). Essential differences result from those factors that are not expected to change over time, such as imbedded technological infrastructures, climatic, geographical or anthropometric considerations.

Options in ISO International Standards may accommodate either market or essential differences.

### **Seek to achieve global relevance in the same way you achieve consensus.**

The ISO Global Relevance policy compels each committee to more carefully consider the value of the standards that it provides, and while voting, members of committees have to consider that value from the perspective of all concerned parties. "One standard, one test, accepted worldwide" is a laudable goal, but it is only achievable if another element exists as a precursor: one global market. Evolving dynamics mean that a single global market does not yet exist in all cases. All committee leaders and participants must prioritize



global relevance considerations in the course of taking consensus decisions within the committee.

### **Demonstrate the commitment and feasibility of preparing a globally relevant International Standard at the outset of the project.**

Providing one solution that accommodates one market (but not others) as the International Standard will not force markets to evolve and coalesce. This may cause markets and industries to look elsewhere for standards that better accommodate their needs. ISO will lose its relevance for those markets and industries. Therefore, ISO committees should determine at the outset of a project whether:

- a globally relevant International Standard presenting one unique international solution in all of its provisions is feasible
- an International Standard is feasible that presents options in specific provisions to accommodate existing and legitimate market, societal and essential differences where justified
- an interim ISO deliverable (ISO/TS, ISO/PAS) is feasible when there is no immediate likelihood of

reaching agreement on an International Standard, but an International Standard is considered feasible at a future time, or

- the preparation of a globally relevant International Standard is not feasible and work should not be undertaken in such circumstances.

Committees are encouraged to form TC-level new work item review advisory groups to explore proposals for new ISO standards at a very preliminary stage to investigate, understand and document the global relevance feasibility of new work item proposals before they are advanced for voting.

### **Committees can only ensure global relevance if they are aware of all the factors that may affect a particular standard's global relevance.**

The participation of all relevant ISO member bodies is seen as a major factor in supporting global relevance. However, developing countries especially have difficulty acquiring the capability, expertise and resources to participate, even when an ISO committee's work is important to their national commercial interests.



Be active in recruiting participation from unrepresented parts of the world where the committee's work has a significant national commercial impact. Find opportunities for twinning and partnering between developed and developing countries to support effective participation. All ISO members, even those that are not participating members of the committee, may submit positions during DIS and FDIS voting as well as during systematic review to bolster the global relevance of the ISO standards.

Furthermore, it can be expected that the participating committee leaders, delegates and experts should be aware of the specific market needs of non-participating countries.

Certainly, manufacturers of products are very aware of their market needs, in all markets where they sell their products. Therefore, representatives of these manufacturers that do participate as leaders, delegates and experts have a particular responsibility and perhaps even a duty to bring this knowledge into the committee's deliberations.

## Limit options and treat them all equally.

As the ultimate goal is to produce as much as possible a unique international solution, or to evolve to one over time, the number of options in a standard should be as few as possible and constitute only a minority of the requirements in an ISO International Standard. The intent is to capture and accommodate market dynamics and essential differences, not regional or national differences, as a market may cross borders and encompass a region or a number of countries. The options to address different market dynamics may take the form of:

- parallel normative clauses in the main body text
- parallel clauses in normative annexes
- parallel parts of International Standards (with each part representing a specific market)

Whichever form the options take, the committee will ensure that all options are treated equally.

**To understand the real global relevance of International Standards on an ongoing basis, we must understand where and how they are used.**

According to the PDCA method, it would be valuable for ISO's stakeholders that the ISO system make optimal use of the systematic review process to document the real worldwide acceptance and use of International Standards. Through improvements to the systematic review process and promotion of effective implementation of it:

- TC/SCs shall take the information resulting from the 5 year systematic review as input for the next revision of the standard, and
- If an ISO standard is accepted as useable (that is, there is no impediment to its use at the national level), each member body should make its best efforts to withdraw and/or modify conflicting national standards.

“Committees are encouraged to form TC-level new work item review groups to explore proposals for new ISO standards at a very preliminary stage.

# About ISO

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is an independent, non-governmental international organization with a membership of 165\* national standards bodies. Through its members, it brings together experts to share knowledge and develop voluntary, consensus-based, market-relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges.

ISO has published more than 24 000\* International Standards and related documents covering almost every industry, from technology to food safety, to agriculture and healthcare.

For more information, please visit [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)

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