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Internet Engineering Task Force and  
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Standardization Sector Collaboration Guidelines

## Abstract

This document provides guidance to aid in the understanding of collaboration on standards development between the Telecommunication Standardization Sector of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU-T) and the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) of the Internet Society (ISOC). It is an update of and obsoletes [RFC 3356](#). The updates reflect changes in the IETF and ITU-T since [RFC 3356](#) was written. The bulk of this document is common text with ITU-T A Series Supplement 3 (07/2012).

Note: This was approved by TSAG on 4 July 2012 as Supplement 3 to the ITU-T A-Series of Recommendations.

## Status of This Memo

This document is not an Internet Standards Track specification; it is published for informational purposes.

This document is a product of the Internet Architecture Board (IAB) and represents information that the IAB has deemed valuable to provide for permanent record. It represents the consensus of the Internet Architecture Board (IAB). Documents approved for publication by the IAB are not a candidate for any level of Internet Standard; see [Section 2 of RFC 5741](#).

Information about the current status of this document, any errata, and how to provide feedback on it may be obtained at <http://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc6756>.

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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction and Scope .....	4
2. Guidance on Collaboration .....	5
2.1. How to Interact on ITU-T or IETF Work Items .....	5
2.1.1. How the ITU-T Is Informed about Existing IETF Work Items .....	6
2.1.2. How the IETF Is Informed about Existing ITU-T Work Items .....	6
2.1.3. How the ITU-T Is Informed about Proposed New IETF Work Items .....	6
2.1.4. How the IETF Is Informed about ITU-T Work Items .....	7
2.2. Representation .....	7
2.2.1. IETF Recognition at ITU-T .....	7
2.2.2. ITU-T Recognition at ISOC/IETF .....	7
2.3. Communication outside of Meetings .....	8
2.4. Mailing Lists .....	8
2.5. Document Sharing .....	9
2.5.1. Contributions and Liaison Statements from the IETF to ITU-T .....	9
2.5.2. Contributions and Liaison Statements from the ITU-T to IETF .....	10
2.5.3. ITU-T and IETF .....	10
2.6. Simple Cross Referencing .....	11
2.7. Preliminary Work Efforts .....	11
2.8. Additional Items .....	11
2.8.1. IETF Information That May Be Useful to ITU-T Participants .....	11
2.8.2. ITU-T Information That May Be Useful to IETF Participants .....	12
3. Security Considerations .....	13
4. Acknowledgements .....	13
5. References .....	13
5.1. Normative References .....	13
5.2. Informative References .....	14
6. Changes since RFC 3356 .....	15
7. IAB Members at the Time of Approval .....	15

## 1. Introduction and Scope

This document provides non-normative guidance to aid in the understanding of collaboration on standards development between the Telecommunication Standardization Sector of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU-T) and the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) of the Internet Society (ISOC). Early identification of topics of mutual interest will allow for constructive efforts between the two organizations based on mutual respect.

In the IETF, work is done in working groups (WGs), mostly through open, public mailing lists rather than face-to-face meetings. WGs are organized into areas, each area being managed by two co-area directors. Collectively, the area directors comprise the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG).

In the ITU-T, work is defined by study Questions which are worked on mostly through meetings led by rapporteurs (these are sometimes called "rapporteur's group" meetings). Questions are generally grouped within working parties (WPs) led by a WP chairman. Working parties report to a parent study group (SG) led by an SG chairman. Work may also be conducted in ITU-T focus groups (see [Section 2.7](#)).

To foster ongoing communication between the ITU-T and IETF, it is important to identify and establish contact points within each organization. Contact points may include:

### 1. ITU-T Study Group Chairman and IETF Area Director

An IETF area director is the individual responsible for overseeing a major focus of activity with a scope similar to that of an ITU-T study group chairman. These positions are both relatively long-term (of several years) and offer the stability of contact points between the two organizations for a given topic.

### 2. ITU-T Rapporteur and IETF Working Group Chair

An IETF working group chair is an individual who is assigned to lead the work on a specific task within one particular area with a scope similar to that of an ITU-T rapporteur. These positions are working positions (of a year or more) that typically end when the work on a specific topic ends. Collaboration here is very beneficial to ensure the actual work gets done.

### 3. Other Contact Points

It may be beneficial to establish additional contact points for specific topics of mutual interest. These contact points should be established early in the work effort, and in some cases the contact point identified by each organization may be the same individual. ITU-T has an additional level of management, the working party chairman. From time to time, it may be beneficial for this person to exchange views with IETF working group chairs and area directors.

Note: The current list of IETF area directors and working group chairs can be found in the IETF working group charters. The current ITU-T study group chairmen and rapporteurs are listed on the ITU-T study group web pages.

## 2. Guidance on Collaboration

This section describes how the existing processes within the IETF and ITU-T may be utilized to enable collaboration between the organizations.

### 2.1. How to Interact on ITU-T or IETF Work Items

Study groups that have identified work topics that are related to the Internet Protocol (IP) should evaluate the relationship with topics defined in the IETF. Current IETF working groups and their charters (IETF definition of the scope of work) are listed in the IETF archives (see [Section 2.8.1](#)).

A study group may decide that development of a Recommendation on a particular topic may benefit from collaboration with the IETF. The study group should identify this collaboration in its work plan (specifically in that of each Question involved), describing the goal of the collaboration and its expected outcome.

An IETF working group should also evaluate and identify areas of relationship with the ITU-T and document the collaboration with the ITU-T study group in its charter.

The following sections outline a process that can be used to enable each group to be informed about the other's new work items.

#### 2.1.1. How the ITU-T Is Informed about Existing IETF Work Items

The responsibility is on individual study groups to review the current IETF working groups to determine if there are any topics of mutual interest. Working group charters and active Internet-Drafts can be found on the IETF web site (<http://datatracker.ietf.org/wg/>). If a study group identifies a common area of work, the study group leadership should contact both the IETF working group chair and the area director(s) responsible. This may be accompanied by a formal liaison statement (see [Section 2.3](#)).

#### 2.1.2. How the IETF Is Informed about Existing ITU-T Work Items

The IETF through its representatives will review the current work of the various study groups from time to time. Each ITU-T study group's web page on the ITU-T web site contains its current list of Questions as well as its current work programme. When an area or working group identifies a common area of work, the matter is referred to appropriate working group chairs and area directors, where they may consider sending a liaison statement to the appropriate study group.

#### 2.1.3. How the ITU-T Is Informed about Proposed New IETF Work Items

The IETF maintains a mailing list for the distribution of proposed new work items among standards development organizations. Many such items can be identified in proposed Birds-of-a-Feather (BOF) sessions, as well as draft charters for working groups. The IETF forwards all such draft charters for all new and revised working groups and BOF session announcements to the IETF new-work mailing list. An ITU-T mailing list is subscribed to this list. Leadership of study groups may subscribe to this ITU-T mailing list, which is maintained by the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau (TSB). Members of the SG-specific listname may include the SG chairman, SG vice-chairmen, working party chairmen, concerned rapporteurs, other experts designated by the SG, and the SG Counsellor. This will enable the SGs to monitor the new work items for possible overlap or interest to their study group. It is expected that this mailing list will see a few messages per month.

Each SG chairman, or designated representative, may provide comments on these charters by responding to the IESG mailing list at [iesg@ietf.org](mailto:iesg@ietf.org) clearly indicating their ITU-T position and the nature of their concern. Plain-text email is preferred on the IESG mailing list.

It should be noted that the IETF turnaround time for new working group charters can be as short as two weeks. As a result, the mailing list should be consistently monitored.

#### 2.1.4. How the IETF Is Informed about ITU-T Work Items

The ITU-T accepts new areas of work through the creation or update of Questions and these can be found on the ITU-T study group web pages. In addition, the ITU-T work programme is documented on each ITU-T study group's web page on the ITU-T web site.

Study groups send updates to the IETF new-work mailing list as new Questions are first drafted or created, terms of reference for Questions are first drafted or updated, or otherwise when there is reason to believe that a particular effort might be of interest to the IETF. Area directors or WG chairs should provide comments through liaison statements or direct email to the relevant SG chairman in cases of possible overlap or interest.

### 2.2. Representation

ISOC, including its standards body IETF, is a Sector Member of the ITU-T. As a result, ISOC delegates are afforded the same rights as other ITU-T Sector Members (see [Section 2.2.1](#)). Conversely, ITU-T delegates may participate in the work of the IETF as representatives of the ITU-T (see [Section 2.2.2](#)). To promote collaboration, it is useful to facilitate communication between the organizations as further described below.

#### 2.2.1. IETF Recognition at ITU-T

Experts and representatives from the IETF that are chosen by IETF leadership normally participate in ITU-T meetings as ISOC delegates. The ISOC focal point will facilitate registration and verification of these people, as appropriate.

#### 2.2.2. ITU-T Recognition at ISOC/IETF

ITU-T study group chairmen can authorize one or more members to attend an IETF meeting as an official ITU-T delegate speaking authoritatively on behalf of the activities of the study group (or a particular rapporteur group). The study group chairman sends the ITU-T list of delegates by email to the working group chair, with a copy to the area directors, and also to the study group. According to IETF process, opinions expressed by any such delegate are given equal weight with opinions expressed by any other working group participant.

### 2.3. Communication outside of Meetings

Informal communication between contact points and experts of both organizations is encouraged. However, formal communication from an ITU-T study group, working party, or rapporteur group to an associated IETF contact point must be explicitly approved and identified as coming from the study group, working party, or rapporteur group, respectively. Formal liaison statements from the ITU-T to the IETF are transmitted according to the procedures described in RFC 4053 [2]. These liaison statements are placed by the IETF onto a liaison statements web page at <https://datatracker.ietf.org/liaison/>. An individual at the IETF is assigned responsibility for dealing with each liaison statement that is received. The name and contact information of the responsible person and any applicable deadline is listed with the links to the liaison statement on this web page.

Formal liaison statements from the Internet Architecture Board (IAB), the IESG, the IETF, an IETF working group or area to the ITU-T are generated, approved, and transmitted according to the procedures described in RFC 4053 [2] and Recommendation ITU-T A.1 [15]. Formal communication is intended to allow the sharing of positions between the IETF and the ITU-T outside of actual documents (as described in Section 2.5.1). This covers such things as comments on documents and requests for input.

### 2.4. Mailing Lists

All IETF working groups and all ITU-T study group Questions have associated mailing lists.

In the IETF, the mailing list is the primary vehicle for discussion and decision-making. It is recommended that the ITU-T experts interested in particular IETF working group topics subscribe to and participate in these lists. IETF WG mailing lists are open to all subscribers. The IETF working group mailing list subscription and archive information are noted in each working group's charter. In the ITU-T, the TSB has set up formal mailing lists for Questions, working parties, and other topics within study groups (more detail can be found on the ITU-T web site). These mailing lists are typically used for ITU-T correspondence, including technical discussion, meeting logistics, reports, etc.

Note: Individual subscribers to this list must be affiliated with an ITU-T member or associate (at this time, there is no blanket inclusion of all IETF participants as members, however, as a member, the ISOC focal point can facilitate access by IETF technical experts, liaison representatives, or liaison managers).



IETF participants may subscribe to ITU-T focus group email lists if they are individuals from a country that is a member of ITU-T.

## 2.5. Document Sharing

During the course of ITU-T and IETF collaboration, it is important to share working drafts and documents among the technical working groups. Initially proposed concepts and specifications typically can be circulated by email (often just repeating the concept and not including the details of the specification) on both the IETF and ITU-T mailing lists. In addition, working texts (or URLs) of draft Recommendations, Internet-Drafts, or RFCs may also be sent between the organizations as described below.

Internet-Drafts are available on the IETF web site. The ITU-T can make selected ITU-T documents at any stage of development available to the IETF by attaching them to a formal liaison statement. Although a communication can point to a URL where a non-ASCII document (e.g., Word) can be downloaded, attachments in proprietary formats to an IETF mailing list are discouraged. It should also be recognized that the official versions of all IETF documents are in ASCII.

### 2.5.1. Contributions and Liaison Statements from the IETF to ITU-T

IETF documents (e.g., Internet-Drafts) or URLs of those documents are most commonly transmitted to ITU-T study groups as liaison statements (see [RFC 4053](#) [2]), but exceptionally can be submitted to a study group as a contribution from ISOC in accordance with Recommendation ITU-T A.2 [16]. In order to ensure that the IETF has properly authorized this, the IETF working group must agree that the specific drafts are of mutual interest; that there is a benefit in forwarding them to the ITU-T for review, comment, and potential use; and that the document status is accurately represented in the cover letter. Once agreed, the appropriate area directors review the working group request and give approval. The rules of the IETF Trust are followed in these circumstances [3]. The contributions are then forwarded (with the noted approval) to the TSB for circulation as a contribution to the appropriate ITU-T study group. Material submitted to the ITU-T as an ISOC contribution is governed by clause 3.1.5 of Recommendation ITU-T A.1 [15]. Any such contribution will be made only after receiving necessary approval of owners of the work in question. In other circumstances, a liaison statement may be appropriate. See [RFC 5378](#) [3] and Recommendation ITU-T A.1 [15] for more information.

### 2.5.2. Contributions and Liaison Statements from the ITU-T to IETF

An ITU-T study group or working party may send texts of draft new or revised Recommendations, clearly indicating their status, to the IETF as contributions in the form of liaison statements or Internet-Drafts. Internet-Drafts are IETF temporary documents that expire six months after being published. The study group or working party must decide that there is a benefit in forwarding them to the IETF for review, comment, and potential use. Terms of reference for rapporteur group meetings may authorize rapporteur groups to send working documents, in the form of Internet-Drafts, to the IETF.

If the study group or working party elects to transmit the text as an Internet-Draft, the document editor would be instructed to prepare the contribution in Internet-Draft format (in ASCII and optionally postscript format as per RFC 2223 [8]) and upload it via <https://datatracker.ietf.org/idst/upload.cgi>. Material submitted as an Internet-Draft or intended for inclusion in an Internet-Draft or RFC is governed by the rules set forth in RFCs 5378 [3], 3979 [4], and 4879 [5]. Alternatively, the study group, working party, or rapporteur group could attach the text to a formal liaison statement.

Both the rapporteur and the document editor should be identified as contacts in the contribution. The document should also clearly indicate the state of development in a particular ITU-T study group.

Note: Liaison statements and their attachments sent to the IETF are made publicly available on the IETF web site.

### 2.5.3. ITU-T and IETF

It is envisaged that the processes of Sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 will often be used simultaneously by both an IETF working group and an ITU-T study group to collaborate on a topic of mutual interest.

It is also envisaged that the outcome of the collaboration will be the documentation in full by one body and its referencing by the other (see Section 2.6 for details). That is, common or joint text is discouraged because of the current differences in procedures for document approval and revision. Where complementary work is being undertaken in both organizations that will result in Recommendations or RFCs, due allowance should be given to the differing perspectives, working methods, and procedures of the two organizations. That is, each organization should understand the other organization's procedures and strive to respect them in the collaboration.

## 2.6. Simple Cross Referencing

Recommendation ITU-T A.5 [6] describes the process for including references to documents of other organizations in ITU-T Recommendations. Recommendation ITU-T A.5 also addresses the situation where a study group or working party decides to incorporate the text of another organization into the text of a Recommendation, rather than referencing it. Information specific to referencing IETF RFCs is found at <http://itu.int/ITU-T/go/ref-ietf-isoc>.

Section 6.1.1 of RFC 2026 [7] describes the process for referencing other open standards (like ITU-T Recommendations) in IETF RFCs.

## 2.7. Preliminary Work Efforts

Both ITU-T and IETF provide mechanisms for early discussion of potential new work areas prior to the official start of work in an ITU-T study group or creation of an IETF working group.

Objectives, methods, and procedures for the creation and operation of ITU-T focus groups are defined in Recommendation ITU-T A.7 [17]. Focus groups are frequently created in new work areas where there is a need for deliverables to be produced on a specific topic within a short timeframe. IETF participants who are not members or associates of ITU-T may participate fully in the work of ITU-T focus groups if they are from a country that is a member of ITU-T.

In the IETF, guidance for BOF sessions is provided in RFC 5434 [13]. Efforts that have not yet reached the working group stage may be discussed in BOF sessions. These sessions typically gauge interest in pursuing creation of working groups. In some cases, these discussions continue on mailing lists.

## 2.8. Additional Items

### 2.8.1. IETF Information That May Be Useful to ITU-T Participants

Information on IETF procedures may be found in the documents in the informative references, and URLs below.

Note: RFCs do not change after they are published. Rather, they are either obsoleted or updated by other RFCs. Such updates are tracked in the `rfc-index.txt` file.

Current list and status of all IETF RFCs:  
<ftp://ftp.ietf.org/rfc/rfc-index.txt>

Current list and description of all IETF Internet-Drafts:

<ftp://ftp.ietf.org/internet-drafts/lid-abstracts.txt>

Current list of IETF working groups and their Charters: (includes area directors and chair contacts, mailing list information, etc.)

<http://www.ietf.org/dyn/wg/charter.html>

Current list of registered BOFs

<http://trac.tools.ietf.org/bof/trac/>

RFC Editor pages about publishing RFCs, including available tools and lots of guidance:

<http://www.rfc-editor.org/pubprocess.html>

Current list of liaison statements:

<https://datatracker.ietf.org/liaison/>

IETF Intellectual Property Rights Policy and Notices:

<http://www.ietf.org/ipr/>

The Tao of the IETF - A Novice's Guide to the Internet Engineering Task Force:

<http://www.ietf.org/tao.html>

#### 2.8.2. ITU-T Information That May Be Useful to IETF Participants

Information about the ITU-T can be found in the informative references and at the URLs below.

ITU-T Main page:

<http://itu.int/ITU-T>

List of all ITU-T Recommendations:

<http://itu.int/itu-t/recommendations/>

ITU-T study group main page for Study Group NN (where NN is the 2-digit SG number):

<http://itu.int/ITU-T/studygroups/comNN/>

Intellectual Property policies, forms, and databases:

<http://itu.int/en/ITU-T/ipr/Pages/default.aspx>

Current list of active ITU-T focus Groups

<http://itu.int/en/ITU-T/focusgroups/Pages/default.aspx>

ITU-T Procedures including:

WTSA Resolution 1, Rules of procedure of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T)

WTSA Resolution 2, Study Group responsibility and mandates

<http://itu.int/publ/T-RES/en>

Author's Guide for drafting ITU-T Recommendations:

<http://itu.int/ITU-T/go/author-guide>

Templates for contributions, ITU-T Recommendations, and liaison statements:

<http://itu.int/ITU-T/studygroups/templates/index.html>

### 3. Security Considerations

Documents that describe cooperation procedures, like this one does, have no direct Internet security implications.

### 4. Acknowledgements

This document is based on the text from RFCs 2436 and 3356 [10] and benefited greatly from discussions during the January 2012 ITU-T Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG) meeting.

### 5. References

#### 5.1. Normative References

- [1] Daigle, L., Ed., and Internet Architecture Board, "IAB Processes for Management of IETF Liaison Relationships", [BCP 102](#), [RFC 4052](#), April 2005.
- [2] Trowbridge, S., Bradner, S., and F. Baker, "Procedures for Handling Liaison Statements to and from the IETF", [BCP 103](#), [RFC 4053](#), April 2005.
- [3] Bradner, S., Ed., and J. Contreras, Ed., "Rights Contributors Provide to the IETF Trust", [BCP 78](#), [RFC 5378](#), November 2008.
- [4] Bradner, S., Ed., "Intellectual Property Rights in IETF Technology", [BCP 79](#), [RFC 3979](#), March 2005.
- [5] Narten, T., "Clarification of the Third Party Disclosure Procedure in [RFC 3979](#)", [BCP 79](#), [RFC 4879](#), April 2007.
- [6] Recommendation ITU-T A.5 (2008), Generic procedures for including references to documents of other organizations in ITU-T Recommendations, International Telecommunication Union.

## 5.2. Informative References

- [7] Bradner, S., "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", [BCP 9](#), [RFC 2026](#), October 1996.
- [8] Postel, J. and J. Reynolds, "Instructions to RFC Authors", [RFC 2223](#), October 1997.
- [9] Brett, R., Bradner, S., and G. Parsons, "Collaboration between ISOC/IETF and ITU-T", [RFC 2436](#), October 1998.
- [10] Fishman, G. and S. Bradner, "Internet Engineering Task Force and International Telecommunication Union - Telecommunications Standardization Sector Collaboration Guidelines", [RFC 3356](#), August 2002.
- [11] Hovey, R. and S. Bradner, "The Organizations Involved in the IETF Standards Process", [BCP 11](#), [RFC 2028](#), October 1996.
- [12] Bradner, S., "IETF Working Group Guidelines and Procedures", [BCP 25](#), [RFC 2418](#), September 1998.
- [13] Narten, T., "Considerations for Having a Successful Birds-of-a-Feather (BOF) Session", [RFC 5434](#), February 2009.
- [14] Alvestrand, H., "A Mission Statement for the IETF", [BCP 95](#), [RFC 3935](#), October 2004.
- [15] Recommendation ITU-T A.1 (2008), Work methods for study groups of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T), International Telecommunication Union.
- [16] Recommendation ITU-T A.2 (2008), Presentation of contributions to the ITU-T, International Telecommunication Union.
- [17] Recommendation ITU-T A.7 (2008), Focus groups: Working methods and procedures, International Telecommunication Union.
- [18] Recommendation ITU-T A.8 (2008), Alternative approval process for new and revised ITU-T Recommendations, International Telecommunication Union.

## 6. Changes since RFC 3356

The introduction has been integrated with the scope section.

Additional information has been added about copyright and IPR issues.

Authorization of liaison managers and liaison representatives from IETF to ITU-T are updated per current IETF procedures documented in [1].

Transmission of formal liaison statements between ITU-T and IETF are updated per current IETF procedures documented in [2].

Description is added of preliminary efforts including ITU-T focus groups and IETF BOFs. ITU-T focus group participation is not limited to ITU-T members.

Obsolete URLs in RFC 3356 from both the ITU-T and IETF web sites are updated, more references have been moved to the References section.

## 7. IAB Members at the Time of Approval

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