

Policy concerning normative references in ISO publications

The basic rules concerning normative references are given in 6.2.2 of Part 2 of the ISO/IEC Directives (4th edition, 2001).

"6.2.2 Normative references

This optional element shall give a list of the referenced documents cited (see 6.6.7.5) in the document in such a way as to make them indispensable for the application of the document. For dated references, each shall be given with its year of publication, or, in the case of enquiry or final drafts, with a dash together with a footnote "To be published.", and full title. The year of publication or dash shall not be given for undated references. When an undated reference is to all parts of a document, the publication number shall be followed by the indication "(all parts)" and the general title of the series of parts (i.e. the introductory and main elements, see annex D).

In principle, the referenced documents shall be documents published by ISO and/or IEC. Documents published by other bodies may be referred to in a normative manner provided that

- a) the referenced document is recognized by the ISO and/or IEC committee concerned as having wide acceptance and authoritative status as well as being publicly available,
- b) the ISO and/or IEC committee concerned has obtained the agreement of the authors or publishers (where known) of the referenced document to its inclusion and to its being made available as required – the authors or publishers will be expected to make available such documents on request,
- c) the authors or publishers (where known) have also agreed to inform the ISO and/or IEC committee concerned of their intention to revise the referenced document and of the points the revision will concern, and
- d) the ISO and/or IEC committee concerned undertakes to review the situation in the light of any changes in the referenced document.

The list shall be introduced by the following wording:

"The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies."

The above wording is also applicable to a part of a multipart document.

The list shall not include the following:

- referenced documents which are not publicly available;
- referenced documents which are only cited in an informative manner;
- referenced documents which have merely served as bibliographic or background material in the preparation of the document.

Such referenced documents may be listed in a bibliography (see 6.4.2)."

It needs to be recalled that the provision for making normative reference to, rather than reproducing text from, another document has a number of benefits such as

- reducing unnecessary and duplicative expenses to standards developers, participants, experts and users of standards,
- eliminating redundancy,
- increasing the speed of development while preserving the scope and global relevance of ISO documents.

The above rules are based, therefore, on the understanding that, whenever it is necessary to make normative reference to another publication, that reference shall preferentially be to the appropriate ISO or IEC publication if it exists. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure the overall consistency and coherence of the full set of ISO and IEC publications. If a committee wishes to make reference to another publication in preference to the corresponding ISO or IEC standard, an exemption must be requested from the Technical Management Board. In this context, it should be noted that when a document is developed under CEN-lead under the Vienna Agreement, and the normative references clause consequently refers to ENs or prENs, a normative annex shall be added indicating the references of the corresponding ISO or IEC publications where they exist. The ISO or IEC references take precedence over the ENs or prENs for the application of the ISO document.

When an appropriate ISO or IEC publication does not exist, publications of other bodies may be referenced normatively. Normative references to such non-ISO or IEC publications that are accepted and used globally may:

- provide greater flexibility to best serve the specific needs of particular communities or sectors;
- establish a worldwide implementation of ISO standards in cooperation and concert with standards of other bodies, rather than in competition with them.

The goal is for ISO documents to be market relevant and thus, in the examination of work needing to be done, ISO committees should consider whether the ISO document may normatively refer to one or more documents already in existence that meet the needs of global users and whose developers agree to any necessary requirements of the IEC/ISO Directives to support such normative references. The above clause of the Directives stipulates a number of conditions that need to be fulfilled. The first condition is that the referenced document is recognized by the responsible ISO or IEC committee as having wide acceptance and authoritative status as well as being publicly available. It needs to be stressed that for the end-user it is imperative that any normatively referenced document be publicly available. For this reason, draft documents which have not reached the enquiry stage in ISO or IEC, or an equivalent stage in the case of documents of other organizations, may not be normatively referenced.

The second condition is that the authors/publishers have given their agreement to the document being referenced and to its being made available to support the committee's standards development efforts as required. It needs to be recalled that while particular standards may be widely used within particular regions, there may well be cases in which other member bodies would wish to study the document before they are able to agree to it being normatively referenced in the proposed ISO publication. For this reason the committee secretariat should obtain a copy of the referenced document and make it available upon request to P-members wishing to review the document to confirm its suitability for normative referencing. Working group conveners and secretariats should endeavour to ensure that such referenced documents are available as soon as possible once the decision has been taken to make reference to them, ideally simultaneously with the authors/publishers giving their agreement to their document being referenced.

The authors/publishers of such referenced documents need also to be aware that, if an ISO member body wishes to adopt an ISO publication as a national publication, then the member body may need to make available a version of any normatively referenced documents in its national language. The authors/publishers of referenced documents will consequently be expected to cooperate with ISO member bodies in such cases.

The third condition requires the authors/publishers of the referenced document to inform the ISO or IEC committee concerned whenever it is proposed to amend or revise the referenced document, as well as of the points that will be revised or amended. This is to allow the committee (fourth condition) to confirm that the document as revised/amended is still appropriate for referencing in the ISO or IEC publication and if necessary to allow amendment of the ISO or IEC publication to refer to the revised/amended edition of the referenced document.

As a matter of policy, ISO does not require normatively referenced non-ISO or non-IEC documents to be transposed into ISO or IEC publications. Nevertheless, when it is proposed to revise a document that is normatively referenced in an ISO publication, the authors/publishers are encouraged to consider the possibility of offering the revision to ISO. If, in other circumstances, a committee sees merit in transposition, rather than normative referencing, of another document, it shall seek the agreement of the authors/publishers of the referenced document. Any unilateral action would essentially constitute copyright infringement which could potentially lead to litigation.

Finally, in the past, a number of ISO committees are reported to have adopted policies of making normative reference ONLY to ISO or IEC publications. The Technical Management Board has now ruled that such policies shall be withdrawn.