



INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION (ISO)
EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR STANDARDIZATION (CEN)

AGREEMENT ON TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN ISO AND CEN (Vienna Agreement)

1 Background

In January 1989 the CEN Administrative Board approved an agreement on the exchange of technical information between ISO and CEN (called the Lisbon Agreement) as a response to the ISO Council resolution 11/1987.

Subsequently, an agreement on technical co-operation between ISO and CEN was approved by the ISO Council resolution 18/1990 and the CEN General Assembly resolution 3/1990. This agreement (called the Vienna Agreement) was published in June 1991. It is accompanied by common ISO-CEN "Guidelines for the TC/SC Chairmen and Secretariats for implementation", approved in 1992 and revised in September 1998.

After a decade of experience, the need for the Agreement was confirmed by ISO and CEN and the present edition was confirmed by the ISO Council resolution 35/2001 and the CEN Administrative Board resolution 2/2001.

This version is a simplified agreement, setting out the principles of its previous version. All relevant and updated operational and process specifications are grouped into a new edition of the "Guidelines for implementation of the Agreement on technical co-operation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement), referred to hereafter as the "implementation guidelines" ".

2 Rationale and objectives

Essentially, the agreement recognises the primacy of international standards (stipulated notably in the WTO Code of Conduct). But the agreement also recognises that particular needs (of the Single European Market for example) might require the development of standards for which a need has not been recognized at the international level. The prioritization of ISO work is also such that in some instances CEN needs to undertake work which is urgent in the European context, but less so in the international one.

As a result, the agreement sets out two essential modes for collaborative development of standards: the mode under ISO lead and the mode under CEN lead, in which documents developed within one body are notified for the simultaneous approval by the other.

The benefits expected from the use of this agreement in accordance with the "implementation guidelines" include:

- increasing transparency of work ongoing in CEN to ISO members, and their possibility to influence the content of CEN standards;
- avoidance of duplication of work and structures, thus allowing expertise to be focused and used in an efficient way to the benefit of international standardization;
- increasing the speed of elaboration, availability and maintenance of standards through a need to establish consensus only once.

3 Basic principles

- this technical co-operation is operated within the current rules, policies and procedures of either ISO or CEN, as relevant for their respective activities;
- ISO recognizes and respects that CEN operates within and must respect a political environment set both in the EEA and through a co-operation of the European Standards Organisations;
- ISO and CEN are committed to values such as transparency, openness, coherence, impartiality and relevancy. CEN supports coherence through withdrawal of conflicting national standards upon publication of a European standard;
- the transfer of work from CEN to ISO is the preferred route but is not automatic;
- when expected results are not attained, the party which is not satisfied can decide to proceed separately;
- CEN accepts that the ISO interest in CEN work, through this agreement, has some consequences for the CEN processes and visibility;
- standards development is done in either ISO or CEN but both bodies ensure that the processes of consensus confirmation and approval are synchronised to achieve the objective of simultaneous publication.
- CEN commits to respond adequately to comments from non-CEN ISO members.

4 Modes of co-operation

Technical co-operation is possible at various levels:

- by regular exchange of information at the level of the CEN Management Centre (CMC) and the ISO Central Secretariat (ISO/CS), such as catalogue, work programme, resolutions, (draft) standards;
- by the adoption of existing international standards as European standards;
- through working by correspondence;
- through (mutual) representation at meetings of technical entities;
- when ISO and CEN agree to submit relevant and approved work items within the same scope to parallel procedures, with agreement on leadership (ISO-lead decided by CEN, CEN-lead decided by ISO).

5 Monitoring and co-ordination

The monitoring of the application of this agreement is entrusted to a Joint Co-ordination Group (JCG) of the ISO Technical Management Board (ISO/TMB) and the CEN Technical Board (CEN/BT). Monitoring includes reporting to these respective boards on progress or specific issues of concern and, where necessary, the review of existing mechanisms with proposals for improvement.

Joint co-ordination meetings of relevant ISO and CEN committees may be held, where necessary, to allocate work and/or to deal with comments received upon parallel enquiry or parallel voting.

Both the ISO Central Secretariat (ISO/CS) and the CEN Management Centre (CMC) shall handle the day-to-day processing and management.

6 Implementation of the agreement

In the event of difficulties arising in the implementation and functioning of this agreement and "implementation guidelines", the ISO committees, the CEN committees and the CEN Reporting Secretariats shall report to their respective Secretaries General, who shall decide on the necessary actions.

7 Duration

This agreement shall remain in force until such time that ISO or CEN request its revision or its termination giving one year's notice.