

# ISO in brief

International Standards for a sustainable world



**ISO** standards achieve benefits for business, government and society – and for people like you and me

**ISO** standards provide practical tools for tackling challenges in all three dimensions of sustainability – economic, environmental and societal

**ISO**'s voluntary standards distil international expertise and good practice, contributed by the people that understand the problems, are best placed to observe the standards in action and to maintain them at the state of the art.





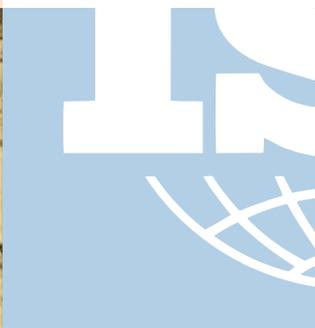
## The ISO standardization system

ISO standards make a positive contribution to the world we live in.

They ensure vital features such as quality, ecology, safety, economy, reliability, compatibility, interoperability, efficiency and effectiveness.

They facilitate trade, spread knowledge, and share technological advances and good management practices.

ISO standards level the playing field. They make transparent the requirements that products must meet on world markets, as well as the conformity assessment mechanisms for checking that those products measure up to standards. As a result, suppliers from developed, developing and transitional economies alike can compete on an equal basis on markets.



ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is a global network that identifies what International Standards are required by business, government and society, develops them in partnership with the sectors that will put them to use, adopts them by transparent procedures based on national input and delivers them to be implemented worldwide.

ISO standards distil an international consensus from the broadest possible base of stakeholder groups. Expert input comes from those closest to the needs for the standards and also to the results of implementing them. In this way, although voluntary, ISO standards are widely respected and implemented by public and private sectors internationally.

ISO – a nongovernmental organization – is a network of the national standards bodies of some 160\* countries, one per country, from all regions of the world, including developed, developing and transitional economies.

Each ISO member is the principal standards organization in its country. The members propose the new standards, participate in their development and provide support in collaboration with ISO Central Secretariat for nearly 3 280 technical groups that actually develop the standards.

ISO members appoint national delegations to standards committees. In all, there are some 50 000 experts contributing directly to the work of the organization each year, plus an estimated 300 000 who follow the work and provide input to national “mirror” committees.

When their work is published as an ISO International Standard, it may be translated and adopted as a national standard by the ISO members.



ISO standards avoid having to reinvent the wheel. They distil the latest in expert knowledge and make it available to all. In this way, they propagate new advances and transfer technology, making ISO standards an invaluable source of knowledge.

\* April 2011





## The ISO system's output

ISO has a current portfolio of over 18 600\* standards that provide practical solutions and achieve benefits for almost every sector of business, industry and technology including agriculture, construction, mechanical engineering, manufacturing, distribution, transport, healthcare, information and communication technologies, food, water, the environment, energy, quality management, conformity assessment and services. They make up a complete offering for all three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, environmental and societal.

The ISO 9000 (quality) and ISO 14000 (environment) families of management system standards have spearheaded a widening of ISO's scope to include managerial and organizational practice. (ISO does not carry out accreditation or certification to these or any other of its standards, nor does it control the certification business, although it provides standards to ensure consistency and good practice in this activities.)

Complementing the above are ISO standards and guides for conformity assessment – verifying that products and services, systems, processes, material and personnel meet the requirements of standards and other specifications. Conformity assessment is becoming vital component of business transactions, global trade and regulatory requirements.

## ISO's partners

ISO collaborates with its partners in international standardization, the IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission) and the ITU (International Telecommunication Union), particularly in the field of information and communication technologies. They have established the World Standards Cooperation (WSC) as the focus for their combined strategic activity.

ISO has a strategic partnership with the World Trade Organization (WTO) aiming to promote a free and fair global trading system. Signatories to the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) commit themselves to promoting and using international standards of the type developed by ISO on the basis of the WTO TBT principles of transparency, openness, impartiality and consensus, effectiveness and relevance, and coherence, and addressing the concerns of developing countries.

ISO collaborates with the United Nations (UN) system and its specialized agencies and commissions, particularly those involved in the harmonization of regulations and public policies. In addition, ISO cooperates with UN organizations that provide assistance and support to developing countries. In all, ISO's technical committees have formal liaison relations with over 700 international and regional organizations.

ISO standards teach the fisherman. "Giving fish" is one way. By implementing ISO standards and participating in their development, developing countries "learn how to fish for themselves". ISO standards transfer know-how, avoid wasting resources, safeguard public health and safety, and provide criteria for evaluating imports and for producing exports to compete on markets worldwide.



ISO standards make the cake bigger. When new technologies or business sectors emerge, internationally agreed ISO standards on basic features, such as terminology, compatibility and interoperability, as well as health, safety and environmental aspects, help to disseminate them and increase the size of the market for the derived products and services.





# ISO – What's new and what's coming

New ISO standards published in recent years or under development address challenges as varied as social responsibility, information and societal security, response to climate change, energy efficiency and renewable resources, sustainable building design and operation, fair and transparent contract procurement, water services, nanotechnologies, intelligent transport systems, food safety management, and health informatics.

In the next few years, ISO will be able to offer new standards addressing a wide range of issues such as the carbon footprint of products, asset management, energy savings, human resource management, natural gas fuelling stations for vehicles, outsourcing, the safety of amusement park attractions, and biogas.



## ISO Resources

**ISO's Website** (in English and French, with top levels in Russian and individual publications in other languages)

[www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)

**ISO Focus+ magazine**

(10 editions annually in English and French)

[www.iso.org/iso/iso-focus-plus](http://www.iso.org/iso/iso-focus-plus)

**ISO videos**

[www.youtube.com/PlanetISO](http://www.youtube.com/PlanetISO)

**ISO Café**

[www.iso.org/isocafe](http://www.iso.org/isocafe)

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