



AC/25/2017

Administrative Circular

2017-08-18

**TO ALL NATIONAL COMMITTEES  
TO ALL TECHNICAL COMMITTEES**

### **Background paper on the translations of IEC publications**

Dear Sir/Madam,

This Administrative Circular provides an overview of recent decisions taken by Council Board (CB) and by Standardization Management Board (SMB) regarding languages at the IEC.

#### **Overview of the changes**

- The current (new) approach does not remove the French language publications. IEC is fully committed to distributing and publishing French versions of working documents and standards as soon as they become available.
- The proposed changes to the IEC Rules of Procedure will not impact translations or the publication of IEC International Standards in English, French and Russian. Currently a significant number of IEC International Standards are published either in English only, or initially in English only, with the French version being published subsequently. Most standards from JTC 1 are in English only and a significant number of standards from TCs 57, 65 and 100 are either in English only or with French versions published at a later date. The change related to translations "*International Standards can ~~shall~~ be published by the Commission in English, French and Russian*" is therefore proposed simply to reflect the situation that is in place today.
- At the FDIS stage, there is now no additional time allocated for translation (originally 60 days were provided to the French National Committee for the French version).
- At the CDV stage no immediate changes have been proposed or made. The English version of all CDV documents is made available to all NCs for a 6-week period, to enable them to prepare translations. In 2020, the SMB will consider whether or not to remove the 6-week period for translation for CDV documents.
- At the CD stage, National Committees can now receive CD-stage publications in revisable format for translation purposes. No changes to time periods have been made.

Yours faithfully,

F.W.P. Vreeswijk  
General Secretary & CEO

Annex: Overview of decisions

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ANNEX

Overview of decisions

Council board decisions

Relevant decision/document	Previous rules	Current rules
<p><b>CB DECISION 2016/016 - Committee Drafts</b></p> <p>“The Council Board approved the proposal to provide National Committees with CD-stage publications in revisable format on a two-year trial basis on condition that each National Committee requesting access to a CD in revisable format signs a declaration form to confirm that the CD will only be used for the purpose of translation into a local language and that proper precautions will be taken to protect IEC copyright.”</p>	<p>CD-stage publications were not available in revisable format</p>	<p>CD-stage publications are provided to National Committees in revisable format on a two-year trial basis on condition that each National Committee requesting access to a CD in revisable format signs a declaration form to confirm that the CD will only be used for the purpose of translation into a local language and that proper precautions will be taken to protect IEC copyright</p>
Relevant decision/document	Current rules	New rules proposed (currently under vote by Council, see document C/2038/DV)
<p><b>CB DECISION 2015/014 - IEC working language</b></p> <p>"The Council Board supported the proposal from the Standardization Management Board (SMB) to amend to Clause 20 of the IEC Rules of Procedure to require the designation of a definitive language of development for each publication. The Council Board also confirmed that amendments should be proposed to clarify that IEC International Standards may be published in any of the official languages but that English shall be the only language for all IEC meetings."</p> <p>Subsequently, some discussions continued in the SMB and were concluded in February 2017. CB therefore decided at its June 2017 meeting to implement CB decision 2015/014 by recommending Council approve amendments to Clause 20 of the IEC Rules of Procedure (see CB Decision 2017/010 below).</p> <p>At its June 2017 meeting, the CB also recommended that the designation of a definitive language of development for each publication be included in the Directives rather than the Rules of Procedure since the topic is related to standards development.</p>	<p><b>Clause 20 of the IEC Rules of Procedure</b></p> <p>The three official languages: of the Commission, English, French and Russian, may be used by the delegates at meetings.</p> <p>The working language of the Council, Council Board, Standardization Management Board and Conformity Assessment Board shall be English.</p> <p>All administrative communications shall be in English only.</p> <p>International Standards shall be published by the Commission in English, French and Russian.</p> <p>The Russian edition will be prepared on behalf of the Central Office by the Russian National Committee, which will supply the Central Office, free of charge, with the agreed number of paper copies or an electronic version.</p> <p>Translations of the Commission's standards into languages other than the above may be prepared by</p>	<p><b>Clause 20 of the IEC Rules of Procedure</b></p> <p>The <u>Commission has</u> three official languages: <del>of the Commission, English, French and Russian, may be used by the delegates at meetings.</del></p> <p>The working language <del>of the Council, Council Board, Standardization Management Board and Conformity Assessment Board</del> shall be English <u>only</u>.</p> <p>All administrative communications shall be in English only.</p> <p>International Standards <u>can</u> <del>shall</del> be published by the Commission in English, French and Russian.</p> <p>The Russian edition will be prepared on behalf of the Central Office by the Russian National Committee, which will supply the Central Office, free of charge, with the agreed number of paper copies or an electronic version.</p> <p>Translations of the Commission's standards into languages other than the above may be prepared by</p>

<p><b>CB DECISION 2017/010 - Updates to the IEC Rules of Procedure</b></p> <p>"The Council Board endorsed the proposed amendments to the IEC Rules of Procedure, as given in attachments to document CB/858/DV, with a view to seeking Council approval."</p>	<p>National Committees of the countries in which these languages are officially in use.</p> <p>In such cases, the National Committees undertaking the translation shall obtain permission from the General Secretary to do so, and send to the Central Office a copy of the translation accompanied by a note certifying the accuracy of the translation and stating from which official version, or versions, the translation has been made.</p>	<p>National Committees of the countries in which these languages are officially in use.</p> <p>In such cases, the National Committees undertaking the translation shall obtain permission from the General Secretary to do so, and send to the Central Office a copy of the translation accompanied by a note certifying the accuracy of the translation and stating from which official version, or versions, the translation has been made.</p>
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**Standardization Management Board decisions**

Relevant decision/document	Previous rules	Current rules
<p><b>2016-06-14</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>SMB Decision 156/5 – CAG – Project management workshop follow-up</b></li> </ul> <p>"... ISO/IEC Directives, The SMB agreed to remove the need for allowing time for translation at the FDIS stage (translation of the text could take place during the voting period). ..."</p>	<p><b>ISO/IEC Directives, IEC Supplement E.3.1.2 French versions of final draft International Standards (FDISs)</b></p> <p>TC/SC secretaries shall make available the English version of the FDIS(s) they request to be circulated for voting to the relevant Technical Officer in charge of their committee at the Central Office which will make the FDIS text available to the French National Committee as well as any other interested National Committee for translation purposes. <b>The French National Committee will be requested to confirm within 7 days if a French version of the FDIS will be provided within the 60 days period. If no response is received after 7 days, a monolingual FDIS will be circulated. The bilingual FDIS will be processed by IEC CO upon completion of the French translation or the 60 days period, whichever occurs first.</b></p> <p><b>When the request refers to a previously translated document, then it shall be accompanied by a marked-up file, preferably using vertical lines in the margins as opposed to coloured revision marks, clearly identifying the changes.</b></p>	<p>The text in ISO/IEC Directives, IEC Supplement has not yet been modified. The Directives Maintenance Team will have to update the portions highlighted in yellow, subject to SMB approval.</p> <p>The provisional text for the Directives, to be discussed by the Directive Maintenance Team, is:</p> <p><i>“French versions of FDIS will be circulated as received; Central Office will no longer invest resources in editing the French versions of FDIS.</i></p> <p><i>Different situations will apply depending on when the French version is received. If received:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>more than two weeks before the close of the FDIS ballot, it will be circulated for vote together with the English version.</i></li> <li><i>less than two weeks before the close of the FDIS ballot but before it closes, it will be published with the English version, but with a disclaimer noting that the French version has not been voted on.</i></li> <li><i>after the close of voting of the FDIS, it will be published when received, but with a disclaimer noting that the French version has not been voted on.”</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>2016-10-10</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>SMB Decision 157/8 – CAG – Translations</b></li> </ul> <p>"SMB decided to suspend the part of Decision 156/5 concerning translation of FDIS: <i>The SMB agreed to remove the need for allowing time for translation at the FDIS stage (translation of the text could take place during the voting period).</i> which by default would come into force on 2017-03-01."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>SMB Decision 157/9 – CAG – Translations at CDV and FDIS stages</b></li> </ul> <p>"SMB discussed the possibility of eliminating translations in the standards production process. SMB agreed to ballot a proposition on eliminating translations with a document explaining the potential risks and benefits of such a step. SMB decided to create ahG 73, Translations at</p>	<p>When the French version of a final draft International Standard is received <b>after the 60 days limit and</b> before the end of the voting period, the Central Office will consider whether it is possible to publish a bilingual</p>	

Relevant decision/document	Previous rules	Current rules
<p>CDV and FDIS, on evaluating the need for translations to prepare this ballot.  Convenor: Jos Remy, NL, Members: CA, ES, DE, US, JP, IT, KR, FR, RU, AFSEC, CENELEC and IEC CO.  The ahG should prepare the report back in time for an SMB ballot to be circulated before SMB meeting 158."</p>	<p>standard within the time limit (see ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1). If not, the bilingual standard will be published later. A note will be inserted in the Foreword of the International Standard to indicate that the French text has not been subject to voting.</p>	
<p><b>2017-02-08</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>SMB Decision 158/14 – ahG 73 – Translations at CDV and FDIS</b></li> </ul> <p>"SMB decided to leave the existing process unchanged, allowing 6 weeks for translation at the CDV stage and no time for translation at the FDIS stage.  In three years' time, at SMB meeting 167, SMB will remove all times for translations, and publish translations of both drafts and final publications if, and when, these become available, on condition that the translation technology permits this action of removal of translation times.  Central Office, in consultation with relevant NCs, will continuously review and report the status of translation technologies.  SMB thanked ahG 73 for its work and disbanded it."</p>	<p>The French version of a final draft International Standard may also be submitted after the standard has been published in English. The Central Office will then prepare and publish a bilingual version, replacing the monolingual version, again with a note in the Foreword to indicate that the French text has not been subject to voting.</p>	