



Administrative Circular

AC/17/2008

2008-06-20

TO ALL NATIONAL COMMITTEES

TO ALL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE AND SUBCOMMITTEES

Dear Sir/Madam,

IEC Global Relevance Policy

IEC has developed a Global Relevance Policy, consistent with that of ISO, to ensure its continuing suitability for present-day needs and in evolving market conditions, given in annex.

A GR toolbox has been developed based on examples used by IEC TCs/SCs in the past, for incorporating alternative requirements in standards and in line with the concept of the GR policy for IEC standards. This toolbox is intended for the use by TCs/SCs for any cases that arise in the future. (Reference document [AC/22/2007](#)).

The GR policy and toolbox are available on the IEC website.

Yours faithfully,

A. AMIT
General Secretary

Annex GR Policy

JL



IEC Global Relevance Policy

1 WTO/TBT

The adoption of the WTO (World Trade Organization) Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement (TBT) places an obligation on IEC to ensure that the international standards it develops, adopts and publishes are globally relevant. The TBT further stipulates that in order to facilitate international trade and preventing unnecessary trade barriers, international standards need to be relevant and effectively respond to regulatory and market needs, as well as scientific and technological developments in various countries. International standards should not distort the global market, have adverse effects on fair competition, or stifle innovation and technological development. In addition, they should not give preference to the characteristics or requirements of specific countries or regions when different needs or interests exist in other countries or regions. Whenever possible, international standards should be performance based rather than based on design or descriptive characteristics.

The development and adoption of an IEC standard that fails to meet these requirements is open to being challenged as creating a barrier to free trade. As a result the IEC Council Board developed IEC's Global Relevance Policy and related implementation guidance to assist technical committees and subcommittees (TC/SCs) in their work.

The IEC will take further steps through implementation of the Masterplan to be more market responsive, including encouraging the participation of developing countries in standardization work for the sake of a broader implementation of the results

2 Definition of Global Relevance

The required characteristic of an International Standard that it can be used/implemented as broadly as possible by affected industries and other stakeholders around the world.

3 IEC Global Relevance Policy Statement

In order to ensure transparency, openness, impartiality and consensus, effectiveness and relevance, coherence, and to address the concerns of developing countries, essential differences in requirements, consistent with the Annex 3 to the WTO Agreement on TBT, may, in well specified cases, be included on an equivalent bases as either normative or informative requirements or in an informative annex.

4 Principles

4.1 In order to serve the interests of the WTO membership in facilitating international trade and preventing unnecessary trade barriers, international standards need to be relevant and to effectively respond to regulatory and market needs, as well as scientific and technological developments in various countries. They should not distort the global market, have adverse effects on fair competition, or stifle innovation and technological development. In addition, they should not give preference to the characteristics or requirements of specific countries or regions when different needs or interests exist in other countries or regions. Whenever possible, International Standards should be performance based rather than based on design or descriptive characteristics.

4.2 An IEC International Standard shall, to the extent possible, represent a unique international solution. In cases where unique international solutions are not possible for specific provisions of an International standard at the current time due to legitimate market and essential differences, International Standards may present a number of approaches to accommodate those differences where justified

4.3 The commitment to participate in the development of and the feasibility of preparing International Standards shall be demonstrated at the outset of a standards development project. Projecting one solution that accommodates one market (but not others) as the International Standard will not force markets to evolve and coalesce. In such cases, the markets and their related industries will look elsewhere for standards that better accommodate their needs, and IEC will lose its relevance in those markets and industries.

4.4 Differences must be based on

- a) technical infrastructures¹
- b) climatic conditions²
- c) or legal and regulatory requirements³

4.5 A National Committee requesting that an essential difference be incorporated in an IEC standard must justify its request. An IEC TC/SC deciding not to accept such request must justify its decision by specific comments only on the content of the proposal.

NOTE General comments, such as "Not needed", will not be counted in the determination of acceptance of the proposal.

4.6 TC/SC members need to be aware that they are developing "state of the art" standards which must have the widest possible acceptance on the global market. TC/SCs must include in their Strategic Business Plans how they intend to meet this obligation.

4.7 Given existing and legitimate market differences, an IEC Standard may pass through an evolutionary process, with the ultimate objective being to publish, at a later point an International Standard that presents one unique international solution in all of its provisions. TCs/SCs may wish to consider how they address current and potential changeable differences in markets. Additional practical guidance maybe found in the IEC Global Relevance Toolbox (AC/22/2007).

5 Implementation

Implementation of the IEC Policy on Global Relevance of IEC technical work and publications shall be monitored by the SMB and periodic progress reports shall be communicated to the Council Board.

TC/SC officers and NC Secretariats may consult the respective IEC Central Office technical officers for any guidance or clarifications regarding the IEC Policy or its implementation.

6 Appeals

National Committees have the right to appeal to the SMB if an IEC TC/SC refuses justified requests for inclusion of essential differences within the International Standard, prior to and including the CDV stage, in accordance with the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1, 5 (2008).

¹ **Technical infrastructure:** Installed electrical power distribution systems, including products within these systems. Essential differences which characterize the electrical systems are frequencies, voltages, currents and earthing systems. (See IEC 60196, 60038, 60059, 60364)

² **Climatic conditions:** See IEC 60721 and based on a classification system.

³ **Legal and Regulatory Requirements:** Such differences shall be included in an informative annex of the relevant IEC standard. The Annex should indicate the law/regulation reference as well as the technical rationale for the requirement and the national ministry/department/agency responsible for the requirement. The annex shall be referenced in the relevant clause. (From AC/70/2003, Implementation of EDRs)