

**ISO** and **IEC**  
**International Standards**  
for policy makers



This leaflet is intended to help public policy-makers, regulators and standards developers understand how the IEC and ISO's International Standards can be used to support policy initiatives. This may include referencing International Standards in legislation or regulation, as well as using them to support other kinds of public policy decisions or actions (such as in public procurement, incentive systems, or awareness campaigns).

Here is a brief overview of topics that are covered in more detail in the document '*Using and referencing ISO and IEC standards to support public policy*'.



### **Key considerations for policy makers**

- ▶ Choosing whether to make the application of the IEC or ISO International Standard mandatory or voluntary: will the referenced standard provide the only solution, or one possible solution?
- ▶ Making sure the chosen International Standard is fit for the regulatory purpose: what level of checks should be put in place to ensure the standard is suitable for use and addresses the needs?
- ▶ Deciding how to reference the International Standard: will the reference be direct? Indirect? Will it be to the whole standard or only to certain clauses and subclauses?
- ▶ Ensuring that the IEC and ISO's copyright is respected, recalling that sales contribute to the recovery of the costs of developing International Standards (see section 6 of the document '*Using and referencing ISO and IEC standards to support public policy*')
- ▶ Updating the reference to the International Standard: how will the policy be kept up-to-date if the IEC and ISO International Standards are revised?
- ▶ Determining if there are conformity assessment implications: does the policy in question involve conformity assessment procedures? Refer to these online resources for more information: [www.iec.ch/conformity/](http://www.iec.ch/conformity/) and [www.iso.org/cascoregulators](http://www.iso.org/cascoregulators)



## **Advantages and benefits of choosing IEC and ISO International Standards to support policy initiatives**

IEC and ISO International Standards represent global consensus on a solution to a particular issue. They offer strategic answers for businesses in their attempt to decrease costs, increase productivity, access new markets, as well as facilitate freer and fairer global trade policy. While policy makers have many options to choose from when looking for a solution to a public issue, the choice to use an IEC or ISO International Standard can offer them a number of important advantages and benefits:

### **Consistency with good policy-making practice**

The core principles that guide the development process for IEC and ISO International Standards – including openness, transparency, effectiveness, relevance, stakeholder engagement and consensus – reflect those principles that also define good governance and policy-making practice.

### **Cost-saving**

Policy makers have the option to develop their own 'in-house' solutions, which can then be referenced in policy. However, this option can be very expensive in terms of the time, money and expertise required. Using existing IEC and ISO International Standards can save time, money and effort.

### **Meeting the obligations of WTO members to reduce technical barriers to trade**

One of the main benefits of standards is that they facilitate trade. IEC and ISO International Standards are developed according to principles agreed by the WTO's Technical Barriers to Trade committee. Policy makers can therefore have confidence when using IEC and ISO International Standards that they are fulfilling their WTO obligations and not

creating any unnecessary obstacles to international trade, which may result from policy makers creating their own 'in-house' solutions.

### **Stakeholder buy-in**

The IEC and ISO's International Standards are developed in a multi-stakeholder environment which ensures that a wide range of technical views are represented, including those relating to social and economic interests. The standards therefore already have the buy-in of a wide range of stakeholders, which can help guarantee a high level of acceptance for the policy guidance or legislation.

### **Global participation and applicability**

International Standards from the IEC and ISO have the advantage of a broad geographical reach as the membership of these two organizations is made up of countries covering around 97% of the world's population. IEC and ISO members have the right to select the specific committees and standards for which they will participate in development, based on their national interests. The IEC, ISO and their respective members also actively encourage the participation of developing countries, and work with them on capacity-building.



## How IEC and ISO International Standards can be used to support public policy

The International Standards developed by the IEC and ISO are voluntary. And while they do not seek to establish, drive or motivate public policy, regulations, or social or political agendas, they can certainly provide valuable support to the implementation of public policy. The table below shows examples of the types of legislative and non-legislative actions that International Standards can support.

Legislative actions	Non-legislative actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Laws (or Acts of Parliament)</li><li>▶ Technical regulations (which support the requirements of laws) e.g. relating to public responsibilities such as safety, security, health, social protection or the environment</li><li>▶ Other actions include rules, notices, orders, determinations, and warrants.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Funding priorities</li><li>▶ Incentive systems</li><li>▶ Awareness campaigns</li><li>▶ Public procurement</li><li>▶ Codes of conduct</li></ul>

More detailed examples of IEC and ISO International Standards supporting legislative and non-legislative actions can be found in section 3 of the document '*Using and referencing ISO and IEC standards to support public policy*'. Section 4 contains further information on direct and indirect methods of referencing.

For policy makers who wish to draw on the experience of other national governments on how to reference International Standards in policy, many more examples are available online at [www.iec.ch/perspectives/government/sectors/](http://www.iec.ch/perspectives/government/sectors/) and [www.iso.org/policy](http://www.iso.org/policy).



## Getting involved in the International Standards development process

- ▶ The IEC and ISO wish to promote engagement with public policy makers and to ensure that their International Standards address policy makers' needs and concerns. Engagement in the International Standards development process allows policy makers to stay informed of (and provide input into) ongoing developments in international standardization that they may find useful to support their policy goals, and to help ensure that IEC and ISO International Standards complement government efforts. At the same time, standardizers can collect essential feedback on difficulties experienced by policy makers in using standards, as well as gain important insight into public policy challenges which could potentially be solved by the development of International Standards.
- ▶ The IEC and ISO invite policy makers to contact their IEC or ISO national member for information on how to get involved. The lists and contact details of IEC and ISO members are available at [www.iec.ch/members](http://www.iec.ch/members) or [www.iso.org/iso/iso\\_members](http://www.iso.org/iso/iso_members) respectively.
- ▶ For more detailed information on the use of International Standards to support public policy, please see the brochure '*Using and referencing ISO and IEC standards to support public policy*', available at [www.iec.ch/perspectives/government/](http://www.iec.ch/perspectives/government/) and [www.iso.org/policy](http://www.iso.org/policy)

### International Organization for Standardization

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**iso.org**

### International Electrotechnical Commission

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