



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.

The ISO standardization system

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 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 them an invaluable source of knowledge.

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 accepted

by public and private sectors internationally.

ISO – a non-governmental organization – is a federation of the national standards bodies of 149* 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 the 3000 technical groups that actually develop the standards.

* On 1 March 2005

ISO members appoint national delegations to standards committees. In all, there are some 50 000 experts contributing annually to the work of the Organization.

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

The ISO system's output

ISO has a current portfolio of 15 036* standards that provide practical solutions and achieve benefits for almost every sector of business, industry and technology. They make up a complete offering for all three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, environmental and social.

ISO's work programme ranges from standards for traditional activities, such as agriculture and construction, through mechanical engineering, manufacturing and distribution, to transport, medical devices, the latest in information and communication technology developments, and to standards for services.

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.