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GUIDE 76

Development of service standards — Recommendations for addressing consumer issues

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ISO copyright office
Case postale 56 • CH-1211 Geneva 20
Tel. + 41 22 749 01 11
Fax + 41 22 749 09 47
E-mail copyright@iso.org
Web www.iso.org

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

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ISO/IEC Guide 76 was prepared by the ISO *Committee on consumer policy* (COPOLCO).

This corrected version of ISO/IEC Guide 76:2008 incorporates the following correction:

- correction of the term “responsibility” to “social responsibility” in the example to point 5 in Table 1 on page 10.

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Introduction

0.1 Standards are increasingly being developed to cover services. This Guide has been prepared to help standards developers in these areas to take account of consumer requirements. It elaborates on the aims of service standards, set out in the ISO/IEC publication *The consumer and standards — Guidance and principles for consumer participation in standards development*^[25]. In addressing the major concerns of consumers, standards can help by representing a consensus on the best knowledge and experience available worldwide.

0.2 This Guide is intended for those involved in the preparation and revision of standards for services, whether International Standards or national standards in developed or developing countries. With its checklist and examples, it also contains information which might be useful for others, such as service providers and educators.

0.3 Service delivery can involve complex relationships and structures, frequently involving many different organizations. Additionally, consumers engage with a variety of public services, such as medical provision or education, for which formal contracts and direct payment might not be applicable.

0.4 In a global market, it is logical that consumers expect to benefit from access to a wider choice of services and service providers. There is also continuing demand for lower prices that are not contrived to disadvantage certain markets and communities. Quality, economy and efficiency are sought, whether or not the consumer pays directly for a service. There is also increasing consumer concern about the need for sustainable development.

0.5 The Internet fuels comparisons and the growth of knowledge and provision of information on which to base choices. Globally, consumers expect that the services they engage with, contract to and purchase will not only be consistent in quality, durability and ease of use, but also safe, environmentally friendly and fair for the communities affected by the services.

0.6 Although all people have a right of access to services, this will not always be relevant or feasible. However, it is advisable that service providers consider the needs of all potential users, including children and those from different cultural and ethnic heritages. This will enable the services to be available to as many people as possible. The issue of accessibility and usability of products and services has become more critical with the increasing percentage of older persons in the world's population. While not all older persons have disabilities, the prevalence of disability or limitations is highest among this demographic group.

0.7 The standardization of services can provide the following benefits:

- build consumer confidence by assuring safety, security, quality, durability and ease of use;
- supply accurate and appropriate information and take into account user requirements;
- support the development of choice and access to a wide range of users;
- provide appropriate and fair forms of redress, where necessary.

0.8 Many national and sectoral codes of practice exist in relation to parts of service delivery which can be considered when developing standards. However, these are most commonly drawn up from the viewpoint of the service provider and are thus not necessarily those of the consumer. This Guide seeks to ensure that consumer needs are addressed. It also allows a common set of criteria for services across countries in which there can be many differences in the scope and application of national consumer protection legislation.

0.9 It is recognized that when developing service standards, it is advisable to take account of applicable statutory or regulatory requirements.