

THE PATH TO A STANDARD



ALMOST EVERYONE KNOWS THE DIN A4 STANDARD. BUT NOWADAYS, STANDARDS DETERMINE NOT ONLY PAPER SIZES BUT MOST AREAS OF OUR LIVES. BUT HOW ARE THE RULES ACTUALLY CREATED WITHOUT WHICH (ALMOST) NOTHING WORKS IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LIFE?

Since 1947, the International Organization for Standardization, or ISO for short, in Geneva has been watching over the worldwide body of rules. Since then, more than 23,000 international standards have been published by the organization - on almost every technical aspect. Currently, 165 countries participate in the international standards process.

But how is a new standard actually created?

1

Almost every country has its own standardization organization - in Germany, this is the Deutsches Institut für Normung e.V. (German Institute for Standardization) with its well-known DIN standards (among which the DIN formats for paper are the best known).

However, because global trade does not stop at borders, the national associations have joined together to form supranational organizations. The largest and most important of these is ISO, based in Geneva. It ensures that goods also fit together internationally. This facilitates exports and world trade.

The famous DIN standard for paper has therefore long since become an international standard - laid down in ISO Standard 216. This ensures, for example, that common A4 papers also fit into printers manufactured in the USA, Japan or China.

2

Few products are as durable as paper measures. Many goods are subject to further technical developments, there are more modern production processes or current safety findings. Standards therefore also have to be put to the test time and again. If, for example, a consumer association determines that ISO standard 20345, which regulates the condition of safety footwear, needs to be supplemented, it can make representations to a standards organization.

The right to propose a new standard or an adaptation is basically open to anyone - from government bodies to individuals to companies. Depending on how relevant a product is for the international market, the proposal can be submitted to a national organization or within an international framework.

3

A proposal has arrived at ISO! But does the revision of a standard really make sense? This question is being examined with the New Work Item Proposal. For this purpose, the more than 165 member organizations are consulted - one for each country.

Only if a relative majority agrees and at least five members are willing to actively work on the new regulation will it go to the next round.

4

A working group is formed to draft the specific text. It is made up of representatives of the national standards bodies involved. Everyone is allowed to participate - after all, the working group should bring together as much expertise and as many opinions as possible.

Depending on the topic, the group can therefore become quite large. In addition to government agencies and consumer protection associations, representatives of industry associations usually also sit on the groups.

The rule here is that no interest group should have the upper hand. The ISO cautions against one-sided representation: the committee chairman must ensure that all relevant groups have a say and make decisions.

5

Not only have several years passed since the first proposal, but drafts have been refined. This is now being published for the first time as a Draft International Standard (DIS). Once again, all interested parties have the opportunity to comment in several precisely defined steps. No objections? Then ISO can take the final step and publish the new standard.

6

ISO is an association, so there is no obligation for individual member countries to adopt its standards. However, because it makes sense to define as many standards as possible internationally in global trade, many countries voluntarily adopt the standards and incorporate them into their own regulations. The European Union, for example, adopts most of the regulations drawn up by ISO.

7

In which set of rules a standard applies can be determined quite easily by the letter-number combination of each rule. In Germany, this works as follows: The abbreviation DIN plus a number indicates that the rule is a standard of the German Institute for Standardization that has significance exclusively or predominantly for Germany.

The abbreviation DIN EN plus a number indicates that the rule has been adopted by all members of the European Common Standardization Organization.

And if the designation is DIN EN ISO plus a number, this means that the standard is valid at national, European and international level.



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