



Consumer Engagement

Ensuring Consumer voices are heard

Introduction

Why do we need consumer engagement?

By involving consumer groups and their representatives in open discussions, and including consumer interests in JTC 1's standards activities we are provided with a critical point of view to the impact of technology on individuals. Standards that are based on a consensus of all affected parties – including end-user consumers – and that address basic consumer needs will be more market-relevant. This will enhance consumer confidence in the resulting products and enable them to be more easily disseminated into the marketplace. It also ensures the opportunity to uphold a practice of safeguarding the public and buyers of goods, services, and digital content, against unfair and unsafe practices in the marketplace.

ISO and IEC have recognized the importance of consumer engagement by jointly issuing the ISO/IEC Statement on Consumer Participation in Standardization Work¹. This policy statement calls upon the members of the two organizations to encourage and support consumer participation in the development of standards for goods and services used by consumers or that otherwise affect their interests. It provides guidance on how to involve consumers at every stage of standards development work. It notes that the degree of consumer participation should reflect the relative importance to consumer interests of a particular standards project.

Under ISO, COPOLCO is the policy-making “think tank” on consumer matters, and reports directly to ISO Council, the executive governance body of ISO. ISO/COPOLCO's mission is to promote and facilitate consumer input into ISO's policy and technical work, and to help consumers around the world benefit from standardization. COPOLCO acts as an early warning system for market trends and focuses views from users of goods and services. It injects emerging topics into standardization. The best-known example is ISO 26000, Guidance on social responsibility, which COPOLCO proposed in 2002 and which is now implemented by leading companies in more than 80 countries around the world.

Consumers across the globe have rights to safety when using products and services. Typically, a robust regulatory framework exists, placing the onus on suppliers to protect consumers from unsafe products and services. However, there are growing challenges to consumer safety, and when things go wrong, the consequences can be devastating—ranging from poor health to serious injury and even death. The increasing and significant prevalence of information technology in everyday life further underscores the critical need for safety measures.

¹ https://www.iso.org/files/live/sites/isoorg/files/archive/pdf/en/copolcoparticipation_2001.pdf

Organisations that represent consumers, are established to provide a forum for consumers to discuss their needs and concerns, and enable these messages to be passed on to organizations and stakeholders that provide the products and services that are in question. It is expected that standards will address the needs of Consumers and will meet stated and implied needs, resulting in the provision of a safer environment, reduction in risk and more consistency of product information.

While ISO/IEC JTC 1 actively develops the Information Technology (IT) related standards, in areas that affect consumers like cybersecurity, user interfaces, artificial intelligence and biometrics, it is crucial to recognize the importance of consumer involvement in this process. Encouraging active participation from consumer representatives in the development of these standards is essential.

JTC 1 emphasizes engagement with national consumer groups through its registered national standards organizations. Many of these organizations have ongoing projects aimed at fostering collaboration with local consumer groups, and many have been doing so for years. This outreach and engagement are vital for JTC 1 to ensure that the standards reflect a realistic view of the needs and concerns experienced by consumers.

ISO/IEC JTC 1

ISO/IEC JTC 1 (Information Technology) is the place in ISO and IEC where information technology standards that are applicable across domains are developed. The scope of JTC 1 is “Standardization in the field of Information Technology”. Having information technology standards developed jointly by ISO and IEC helps to avoid duplication and conflict, and it benefits the many ISO and IEC Technical committees that build upon these foundational standards. JTC 1 works selectively with technical committees and other organizations with domain expertise to develop domain-specific information technology standards. JTC 1 works cooperatively with liaison organizations, and it has a program enabling cooperation with consortia.

JTC 1 provides the standards approval environment for integrating diverse and complex IT technologies. These standards rely on the core infrastructure technologies developed by JTC 1 centres of expertise, complemented by specifications developed in other organizations.

JTC 1 is comprised of national standards organization, commonly known as national bodies (NB) and members from those national organizations. In total there are in the region of forty-five participating organizations (P-members) and sixty observing organizations (O-members). Participating organizations actively develop standards and have voting rights on decisions. Observing members can follow progress of developments, provide comments, but have no voting rights.

Since the initial establishment of JTC 1 in 1987, the committee has published in excess of 3,500 standards and has over 500 currently in development. The numbers of active individuals taking part in some area of JTC 1 standards development fluctuates from day to day, but it is broadly in the region of 5,000.

JTC 1 needs to incorporate Consumer views into its standards, during their development. As such JTC 1 encourages, through its national bodies, participation by consumer representatives. JTC 1 also has a close relationship with the ISO COPOLCO group, tying together the broader ISO perspective with the sector specific IT related requirements of JTC 1’s technology field.

National Standards Organizations and Consumer Group Alliances

Below are a number of examples of how JTC 1, through its national standards organizations bring together Consumer representatives and Consumer groups to help develop standards that meet consumer needs.



Australia

Australia and Standards Australia (SA) has a longstanding commitment to Consumer engagement and regularly have outreach activities with the Consumer industry associations to ensure that the voices of consumers are heard and taken into account.

Australia has outreach activities and active partnering initiatives with consumer organizations including:

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN²)

“Australia’s peak communications consumer organisation representing individuals, small businesses and not-for-profit groups as consumers of communications products and services. ACCAN focuses on goods and services encompassed by the converged areas of telecommunications, broadcasting, the internet and online services, including both current and emerging technologies.”

² <https://accan.org.au/>

Vision Australia Foundation³

“Vision Australia is the leading national provider of personalised technology, services and information for anyone experiencing or supporting those with vision loss.”

The Consumers’ Federation of Australia (CFA)⁴

“CFA represents a diverse range of consumer organisations, including most major national consumer organisations. CFA advocates in the interests of Australian consumers. CFA promotes and supports members’ campaigns and events, nominates and supports consumer representatives to industry and government processes, develops policy on important consumer issues and facilitates consumer participation in the development of Australian and international standards for goods and services.”



CHOICE⁵

“We are the leading consumer advocacy group in Australia. We want your voice to be heard loud and clear when it comes to anything consumer-related, from saving money to choosing the best products and services for your family. Independent and member-funded, CHOICE is here to ensure that Australian consumers like you get a fair go.”

Denmark

Danish Standards have a long-standing commitment to engage consumer interest in standardization, including by offering free membership to Consumer organizations and NGOs to help remove barriers for possible representatives. Danish Standards also promote active consumer engagement and inclusion through webinars, workshops and other events.



Danish Standards Consumer Committee⁶

The Consumer Committee advises Danish Standards on matters concerning consumer interests in standardization work. The Consumer Committee assists in prioritizing and coordinating standardization efforts and related

³ <https://visionaustralia.org/>

⁴ <https://consumersfederation.org.au/>

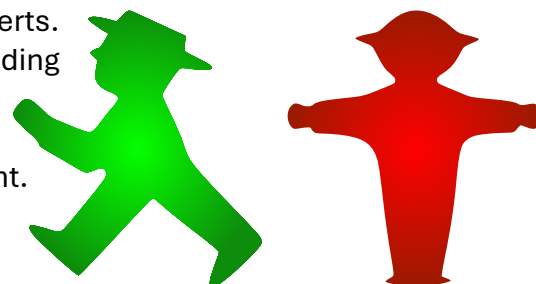
⁵ <https://www.choice.com.au/>

⁶ <https://www.ds.dk/forbrugerkomite>

activities both nationally and internationally across various areas of standardization. Appointed consumer representatives follow the work of selected national and international standardization committees and provide consumer input where relevant.

Germany

The German Institute for Standards (DIN) established a DIN Consumer Council (CC) in 1974, which allows direct participation into standards development committees by direct member participation or appointed voluntary experts. The CC is tasked with establishing and understanding consumer concerns. The CC also collaborates with the European group ANEC and ISO COPOLCO to access a European and an international consumer viewpoint. Participation in DIN CC is free.



DIN CC⁷

“DIN Consumer Council represents consumer interests in national, European and international standardization. We consult and support DIN's steering bodies and working bodies.”

ANEC⁸

“ANEC represent the European consumer interest in the creation of technical standards, especially those developed to support the implementation of European laws and public policies. ANEC has an interest in the application of standards, including market surveillance and enforcement, accreditation and conformity assessment schemes. We seek to influence the development or revision of European legislation related to products and services that is likely to affect the consumer, especially where reference is made to standards.”

Japan

The Japanese Industrial Standards Committee (JISC), commonly known as the Japanese National Body, has engaged in standardization activities with stakeholders such as producers, users, and consumers—specifically in the establishment and revision of Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS).

There are many consumer organizations in Japan, and some of them participate in standardization activities within JISC. However, only a few of these organizations are closely involved with the Japanese government in the field of IT.

⁷ <https://www.din.de/en/about-standards/benefits-for-consumers/din-consumer-council>

⁸ <https://www.anec.eu/>

In addition, members of the Information Technology Standards Commission of Japan (ITSCJ), which is responsible for IT standardization activities within JISC, are working to incorporate consumer needs into their initiatives.

Nippon Association of Consumer Specialists (NACS)⁹

“The Japan Society of Consumer Affairs Advisors, Consultants, and Consultants (NACS) was established in 1988, with the permission of the Ministry of International Trade and



Industry (currently the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) with the aim of ‘harmonizing consumer interests and corporate activities and contributing to society.’

Members are ‘Japan’s largest expert organization on consumer life’ consisting of ‘consumer life advisor’ certified as ‘consumer life advisor’ certified by the Prime Minister and Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, certification of the Japan Consumer Association, ‘Consumer Life Consultant’, and those who have specialized knowledge and experience equal to or greater than the above qualified person.

Currently, about two thousand members of seven branches nationwide are active in consumer-related fields.”

Japan Consumer Association (JCA)¹⁰

“The Japan Consumer Affairs Association is a public interest corporation established in September 1961 for consumer education and consumer awareness activities. We are developing human resources who can provide information on and raise awareness of basic knowledge necessary for everyone to live a fulfilling consumer life, and to provide information on improving their lives and conduct awareness-raising activities.

The consumer lifestyle consultant training course, which has been held as an activity aimed at supporting consumers’ independence since 1962, produced 61 students in 2022. There are more than 3500 graduates nationwide, and they are engaged in various activities as bearers of the consumer movement.

In the Consumer Consultation Office, we receive various consultations on consumer life, and provide advice and mediation.

The Consumer Officers Training Course, which has been held every year since 1973, is aimed at developing human resources who correctly understand and implement consumer orientation within the company and develops courses that focus on consumer issues and consumer responses.”

⁹ <https://nacs.or.jp/>

¹⁰ <https://jca-home.jp/>

United Kingdom

For over seventy years the British Standards Institute (BSI) has actively engaged with consumer groups in the United Kingdom. It is a priority for BSI to ensure all relevant stakeholders, including consumers, are involved in standards development. BSI facilitate opportunities for consumers and consumer groups to have a voice in the standards development process. To enable this, groups and forums, like the BSI Consumer Forum and Council have been established with free membership for participants.

BSI Consumer Forum and Council

“The BSI Consumer Forum and Council provide a central body for all consumer groups from across the consumer protection landscape, to share valuable insight about topical consumer issues. Members include charities, regulators, enforcement agencies and government departments who may have expertise in a specific topic, the needs of particular groups of consumers, or general consumer issues. There is an annual Consumer Forum conference for members and other interested parties”



Consumer Public Interest Network (CPIN)¹¹

“CPIN is an independent organization that exists to empower and protect consumers through effective consumer representation in British Standards.”

United States

ANSI, the American National Standards Institute based out of New York both engages with consumer groups and regularly promotes activity between the organizations. ANSI holds regular outreach activities including workshops and monthly webinars of which many papers and recordings are posted on their Standards Spotlight page, on their website. ANSI’s Consumer Interest Forum (CIF) provides strong leadership in the Consumer Policy Committee of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO COPOLCO); the ANSI CIF is the U.S. link to ISO COPOLCO.

ANSI develops and publishes news articles to promote their engagement and offers the opportunity for direct engagement of consumers to the standards development environment, via consumer participation fund which is aimed at reducing financial barriers to participation.

¹¹<https://www.bsigroup.com/en-HK/About-BSI/uk-national-standards-body/How-standards-help-consumers/>

Articles are often promoted through the ANSI Standards Spotlight page¹²

Consumer Product Safety Commission Consumer Ombudsman (CPSC)¹³

“CPSC works to save lives and keep families safe by reducing the unreasonable risk of injuries and deaths associated with consumer products and fulfilling its vision to be the recognized global leader in consumer product safety.”

Note: Please also note that there are many additional consumer groups, national bodies with consumer engagement programs, government programs and consumer-focused NGOs not featured above.

Summary

Through these national campaigns by standards organizations, the voices of Consumers and Consumer groups are being heard, having a positive effect on the standards that are developed.

This work however never ends, new standards areas are started, new consumer groups are formed, and individual resources change over time. JTC 1 is committed to ongoing engagement with consumers and regularly monitors activity by its groups and promotes an internal level of information sharing related specifically to consumer activity.

JTC 1 welcomes participation by consumers and consumer groups take an active role in development of IT related standards and encourages this to happen.

For more information please contact your local national standards organization or contact JTC 1 directly: <http://www.jtc1info.org/contact>



¹² <https://www.ansi.org/outreach/consumers/participation-opportunities>

¹³ <https://www.cpsc.gov/About-CPSC/Consumer-Ombudsman>



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