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Annex C
(inform ative)

Standards Infrastructure Description

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HLJ : Once again, a full replacement for this Annex, so no further diff marks. I would point out a general editorial issue here: ISO standards and technical reports do not allow references to commercial or academic organizations, so a bit of pruning will be necessary in this Annex. I would also recommend removing any time-perishable information: number of members, dues, meeting schedules, telephone numbers, etc. And I renew my request for more knowledgeable readers to point out requirements for diacritical marks in some of the non-English names and addresses. Thanks.

C.1 Introduction

This annex provides a brief summary of the major national and international organizations working on the standardization of information technology.

There are two major categories of open standards organizations. One consists of formally-recognized standards bodies, responsible for definition and dissemination of public standards. Their specifications are known as formal or de jure standards. International, national, and regional standards groups, and some professional and technical organizations' standards groups are examples of formal standards bodies. Organizations specifying standards for open system usually give precedence to international standards first, then regional, national, and finally professional group standards.

The other standards organization category consists of informal bodies. Informal standards bodies are typically created by suppliers or users of information technology, usually using a consensus method, to enable the implementation of standards. They produce specifications known as industry standards or de facto standards. Certain trade associations, industry groups, vendor consortia, and user groups are examples of informal standards bodies. For informal specifications to be approved as formal standards (e.g., international or national standards) informal standards groups typically submit their specifications to formal standards organizations.

The term ‘‘de facto standard’’ is sometimes applied to popular vendor-defined systems. Such systems, however, are closed systems, often controlled in a proprietary fashion. Although they have value, closed de facto standards are not the subject of this guide.

Most standards bodies support three types of status for their standards or specifications—approved, draft, and work item. An approved standard is one that has been fully ratified by whatever means the approving standards body uses. A draft standard is one that has yet to be fully ratified, such as an ISO DIS (Draft International Standard) or a CEN ENV. Work item is a catch-all phrase for everything else, such as immature specifications, technical reports, etc., that have not yet achieved draft status.

C.1.1 International Standards Bodies Overview

Standards with the highest status are internationally agreed ones. In information technology, these are produced and published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Other standards and/or recommendations are issued by the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the CCITT. International standards bodies participants are normally countries and trade bodies, rather than individual suppliers or users.

C.1.2 National Standards Bodies Overview

Like the international standards bodies, most national bodies do not admit either suppliers or users directly, but receive representatives from interested trade bodies. In general, the national bodies support and adopt the international standards, developing national standards only if no international standards are available, or to meet special national requirements. Each country has a national body that is the formal representative to the international standards groups.

The relationship between the major international and national standards groups is shown in Figure C-1.

C.1.3 International and National Standards Bodies Relationship

Nongovernment standards organizations include trade associations, professional and technical societies, vendor consortia, user groups, and other special interest groups. Actual standards development occurs within these groups. The standards specified by formal standards groups within this category typically are subsequently submitted to national or international standards organizations for approval. Many informal bodies submit their specifications to formal bodies for approval as an accredited standard. (See Figure C-2).

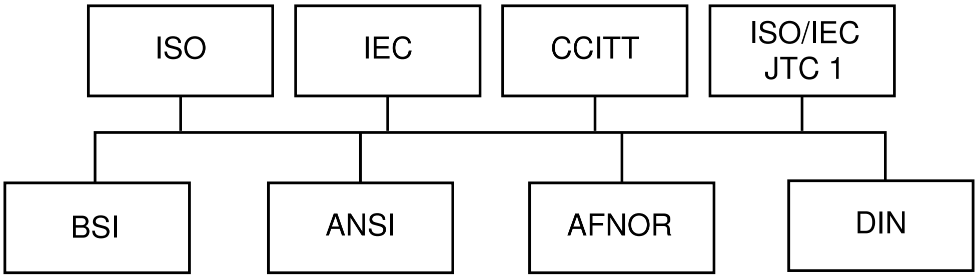

Figure C-1 − International and National Standards Bodies

C.2 The Formal Standards Groups

C.2.1 International and National Standards Organizations

AFNOR : Association Francaise de Normalization

AFNOR is the French national standards body. Its responsibilities include sourcing, coordinating, approving, and promoting standards, representing the French at international meetings, and controlling the use of the NF label—a trademark that shows compliance with a French national standard. AFNOR publishes three types of standards documents— AFNOR -approved standards that are mandatory for use in the public sector, experimental standards that use new processes or techniques and whose use is voluntary, and information or guide standards.

For further information, contact Association Francaise de Normalization (AFNOR), Tour Europe − Cedex 7, 92080 Paris La Defense, Telephone: (1) 42 91 55 55, Telex: AFNOR 611 974F, Fax: (1) 42 91 56 56.

ANSI : American National Standards Institute

ANSI is the national standards coordinating and approval body for the United States. A voluntary organization founded in 1918, the ANSI performs three major types of functions.

First, the ANSI approves standards and accredits standards development groups and certification programs. ANSI does not itself develop standards. Instead, it approves voluntarily-submitted specifications that were developed by technical and professional societies, trade associations, and special interest groups, if these specifications and/or groups meet ANSI criteria for due process and consensus.

ANSI accredits three types of organizations. One is professional societies, such as the IEEE. The second is committees formed for the exclusive purpose of developing standards, such as X3. The third is accredited by ANSI to use the canvass method to develop standards. Such organizations prepare a standard using their