Compendium of International Organisations' Practices

Working Towards More Effective International Instruments

Snapshots of IO Practices

ISO Systematic Review (SR)

Organisation(s): International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

The Snapshots of IO Practices present examples of specific efforts undertaken by an international organisation to work towards more effective international instruments. They aim to highlight examples of practices within the five focus areas of the Partnership of International Organisations for Effective International Rulemaking (IO Partnership), namely the variety and development of international instruments, their implementation, evaluation, ensuring stakeholder engagement, and co-ordination among IOs. The snapshots are submitted by the secretariats of the relevant international organisations implementing the relevant practice. The practices were compiled by the OECD Secretariat and focal points of the IO Partnership (UNCITRAL, OIE, WHO, ISO, WCO, BIPM, and SIECA), with a brief review to ensure consistency and comparability of the information provided within the snapshots. The inclusion of a practice in these snapshots implies no endorsement or assessment of that practice on the part of the OECD Secretariat or the focal points of the IO Partnership.

1	Overview of the Practice	Answers	Comments and intersections
1.1	Organisation	International Organization for Standardization (ISO)	
1.2	Area of relevance among the IO partnership focus themes (variety of instruments, implementation, stakeholder engagement, evaluation, co-ordination)	Evaluation (of use of instruments)	
1.3	Name of the Practice	ISO Systematic Review (SR)	
1.4	Name of person(s) completing the template		

2	Description of the Practice	Answers	Comments and intersections
2.1	Please describe the practice shortly, providing information on its core features.	Systematic Review (SR) – this is the process by which ISO determines whether its standards are current and are used internationally. Each standard is reviewed at least every 5 years – the committee responsible for the standard can launch a review sooner than 5 years, if it feels this is necessary. If no action is taken by the committee, an SR ballot is automatically launched at the 5-year mark. The ballot is sent to all members of ISO and contains a series of questions related to the use of the standard in their country, its national adoption or use in regulations, and its technical soundness (whether it should be confirmed or revised). Part of the information received from SR is used to feed the 'ISO/IEC national adoptions database', which provides information on which standards have been nationally adopted, whether in identical or modified form, and the national reference numbers.	
2.2	What are the objectives of the practice?	To determine whether the standard is: • Widely used (if it is not used in at least 5 countries it is not considered international and will be proposed for withdrawal from the ISO catalogue) • Up-to date (if obsolete, it will be proposed for withdrawal, if it needs updating, it will be proposed for revision)	
2.3	What have been the key results of the practice?	ISO standards and the ISO catalogue have been kept up-to-date through this practice.	
2.4	In what year was the practice introduced?	This process has been implemented in ISO for a long-time. It has certainly been around since before the 1990s, and in a very similar format to today, but may go back much further than this.	

2.5	Has the practice been updated/reformed since then? If yes, when and how has it evolved over time?	The most significant recent reform took place in May 2016, when it became compulsory for all participating members in a committee to vote on SR ballots. This reform was to make sure that we received a minimum number of responses to SR ballots, and that all major countries concerned would cast a vote.	
2.6	What do you consider to be the primary strengths of the practice?	It is applied systematically to all deliverables and the current electronic balloting system means both that ballots don't get forgotten and that it is easy to keep track of the level of responses from members.	
2.7	What do you consider to be the main challenges faced during the implementation of the practice?	The quality of SR responses depends on the processes in place at national level; the way each standards body consults its stakeholders and determines its answers to the SR questionnaire. The better this is done, the better quality the results. If consultations are absent or the right/not enough stakeholders are consulted, then the answers provided risk being incorrect and not reflecting the true use of the standard. ISO/CS provides guidance to members on the SR process, but members (national standards bodies) have full autonomy over how they complete the process	

2.8	Does the practice have a formal/normative basis within the organisation or is it conducted informally? Does this basis make the practice mandatory or voluntary? If there is formal basis, please provide the relevant link or documentation.	The practice is enshrined in the ISO/IEC Directives Part 1 and Consolidated ISO Supplement, clause 2.9.1 (Maintenance of deliverables). The process is mandatory (as outlined in clause 1.7. 1of the ISO Supplement). https://www.iso.org/sites/directives/current/consolidated/index.xhtml	
2.9	At what frequency is the practice applied? i.e. is it conducted once or on an iterative basis?	The process is launched automatically every 5 years for every published international standard (unless the committee launches it first). Other normative deliverables (Technical specifications and Publicly available specifications) undergo SR at least every 3 years. The SR ballots are launched in batches, 4 times per year.	
2.10	Is this practice applied systematically, (e.g. with respect to every normative instrument, according to specific criteria or on an ad-hoc basis)?	Yes, systematically for all ISO deliverables.	
2.11	Please provide specific details or examples to illustrate the practice (including supporting links and documents).	ISO has a guidance document that explains the process and the questions in the SR ballot: https://www.iso.org/files/live/sites/isoorg/files/store/en/PUB100413.pdf The questions can also be found online here: https://isotc.iso.org/livelink/livelink/fetch/2000/2122/4229233/Systematic_Review_questions_%28in_PDF%29.pdf?nodeid=6110295&vernum=-2	

3	Design of the Practice	Answers	Comments and intersections
3.1	Who designed the practice (e.g. Was it developed internally, in collaboration with other organisations, etc?)	The practice was designed internally. Further details about its original development are unavailable.	
3.2	Which stakeholders were engaged with in the design of the practice?	ISO members (national standards bodies). All of the standards development practices in ISO are designed by or in collaboration with ISO members who are part of the relevant ISO governance body dealing with technical work (the Technical Management Board).	
3.3	How long did it take to design the practice?		
3.4	What resources were needed to design the practice initially (i.e., staff, budget etc.)?		
3.5	What challenges were encountered during the design of the practice and how were they overcome?		
3.6	Has the practice been tested before implementation (i.e. pilot phase)? If yes, please describe.		

4	Implementation of the Practice		
4.1	Which units are responsible for implementing the practice within your IO?	The Standardization unit at the ISO Central Secretariat launches the ballots (sometimes upon instruction from technical committees). The individual committees concerned (those reposnsible for the maintenance of the standard undergoing SR) decide what action to take upon receiving the results of the SR ballot. The Technical Policy unit at the ISO Central Secretariat is responsible for the policy side and maintaining the rules and processes that govern the SR (these rules are set out in the ISO/IEC Directives). The technical policy unit ensures that any changes to the rules are implemented by the standardisation unit and the technical committees.	
4.2	Are IO members involved in implementing the practice? If so, how?	Yes, the ISO members must implement the SR practice at national level. They are responsible for putting in place national processes to consult their stakeholders about how/whether they use the ISO standard, gather feedback, and then reply to the SR questionnaire.	
4.3	Are external actors beyond the organisation or its membership involved in implementing the practice? If so, how?	External actors are not directly involved. Only so far as the ISO members consult their national stakeholders about their use of standards, in order to respond to the SR ballot.	
4.4	Which resources are needed to implement the practice (e.g., staff and budget)?	There is no specific budget allocated to SR, this is part of the core business and SR-related tasks are well integrated into the everyday wotk of the staff in the standardisation department. The proportion of time staff spend dealing with SR would be minor in comparison to dealing with the development of standards. This is helped by the automation of the electronic balloting process.	

5	Outputs and Evaluation of the Practice	Answers	Comments and intersections
5.1	Has the practice been evaluated or reviewed?	Yes.	
5.2	If yes, who carried out the evaluation (please specify whether it was done internally or externally)	The Technical Management Board (TMB) and its sub-group, the Directives Maintenance Team (DMT) has carried out reviews of the SR process, or parts of it. This was an entirely internal process.	
5.3	If yes, please describe the evaluation methodology? (e.g. were any quantitative or qualitative indicators/criteria used to measure/assess the outcomes of the practice?).	Every June, the TMB reviews all the statistics related to the standards development process, which includes those related to SR (response rate, % of responses sent on time etc). If any issues are identified, then the whole process, or parts of it, may be reviewed further by the TMB or the DMT – the DMT is the group that is responsible for the ISO Directives and Supplement (the rulesfor the standards development process). The DMT can propose changes to the rules, which must then be approved by the TMB.	
5.4	If yes, what were the conclusions of the evaluation,and has the practice evolved subsequently? If possible, please attach related documents or provide a link.	The low response rate to SR ballots is what led the TMB and the DMT to review the rules in 2015 and to make SR voting compulsory for all participating members of the relevant committes. The rule was implemented in May 2016.	

6	Additional comments and information	Answers	Comments and intersections
6.1	Is there any more information or documentation that would be valuable to share in relation to the practice (e.g. links, reports, meeting minutes, supporting documents)?		
	Sources		