



ISO in one page

ISO (International Organization for Standardization) is the world's **largest developer** and publisher of **International Standards**. ISO began operations on 23 February **1947**.

ISO is a **network** of the national standards institutes of **some 157 countries**, with a Central Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland, that coordinates the system. More than 100 of ISO's members are from **developing countries**.

Every full member of ISO has the right to take part in the development of any standard which it judges to be important to its country's economy. No matter what the size or strength of that economy, each participating member in ISO has **one vote**.

ISO standards are voluntary. As a non-governmental organization, ISO does not regulate or legislate. However, countries may decide to adopt ISO standards as regulations or refer to them in legislation. In addition, ISO standards may become a **market requirement**.

ISO has more than **17 000 International Standards** in its current portfolio. ISO's work programme ranges from standards for traditional activities, such as agriculture and construction, through mechanical engineering, manufacturing and distribution, to transport, medical devices, the environment, safety, information and communication technologies, and to standards for good practice and for services.

ISO launches the development of new standards in response to the sectors that express a clearly established need for them. At the end of 2007, the ISO standards-development system comprised **3 488 technical bodies** in the ISO system, including **201 ISO technical committees**.

The **costs of developing standards** are mainly borne by the ISO members that manage the specific standards development projects and the business organizations that provide experts to participate in this work.

An average of seven ISO technical meetings takes place every working day somewhere in the world. An increasing amount of **the work is carried out electronically**, which saves time and costs. The time it takes to develop and publish an ISO standard is down from an average of 4.2 years in 2001 to 3 years in 2007.