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Comparative testing of consumer products and related services — General principles

Essais comparatifs des produits de consommation et de leurs services — Principes généraux

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ISO copyright office
Ch. de Blandonnet 8 • CP 401
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva, Switzerland
Tel. +41 22 749 01 11
Fax +41 22 749 09 47
copyright@iso.org
www.iso.org

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) are worldwide federations of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies and IEC National Committees). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO and IEC technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO or IEC, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO and IEC shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by the ISO Committee on Consumer Policy (COPOLCO).

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO/IEC Guide 46:1985), which has been technically revised.

The main changes compared with the previous edition are as follows:

— clarification in the scope to exclude conformity assessment and anti-counterfeiting;

— clarification in Clauses 2 and 3 on the use of International Standards for accredited laboratories, e.g. ISO/IEC 17025;

— addition of Annex A to explain how comparative testing differs from other types of testing, including for market surveillance and conformity testing;

— updating of notes and bibliographical references.

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Introduction

This document sets out general principles for the conduct of comparative testing. These principles are applicable to consumer products, services and a combination of both. They can be used by bodies and associations which conduct comparative testing programmes. The purpose of this document is to enable meaningful test results and information to be presented in a way which will help consumers and others to make an informed choice suitable to their own needs. The products and services under test can be based on a local, national or international market and the characteristics tested can be either very specific or broadly based, provided that the range and limits are clearly stated.

NOTE 1 This document indicates some, but not all, of the means of applying the principles.

NOTE 2 The purpose of comparative testing is different from that of conformity assessment testing (see ISO/IEC 17000).

NOTE 3 Counterfeit goods are a real and growing problem in all countries. While conformity assessment testing is much more likely to detect cases of counterfeit goods than comparative testing, counterfeit goods and other emerging challenges are creating a new environment for comparative testing organizations which might entail the need for closer cooperation with regulatory authorities in the future.

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Comparative testing of consumer products and related services — General principles

1 Scope

This document establishes general principles for the conduct of comparative testing of products and services for the information of consumers.

It does not cover anti-counterfeiting or conformity assessment.

NOTE ISO 12931 provides performance criteria for authentication solutions used to combat counterfeiting of material goods. The ISO Committee on Conformity Assessment (CASCO) develops standards on conformity assessment.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at http://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at http://www.electropedia.org/

3.1
comparative testing
process of measuring the properties or performance of products

4 General principles

4.1 Choice of products or services

Every reasonable effort should be made to reflect what is or will be available on the market, unless the limits of selection are explained.

NOTE "Reasonable efforts to reflect what is available on the market" might include consulting manufacturers (agents/representatives/importers) or checking current literature, catalogues and a variety of other sources, including the Internet. It is in the interests of consumers and manufacturers (agents/representatives/importers) that such information be made available.

4.2 Sampling

Samples for testing should be the same as those that are or intended to be available to consumers. In all cases, care should be exercised that a selection is made at random and that special samples are not introduced. Attention should be paid to the conditions of sampling, transport, storage and the nature of the product or service before the test.

Precautions should be taken to ensure as far as possible that the results obtained are representative of the product or service offered on the market at the time of sampling.

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