
ASEAN Guidelines for Harmonisation of Standards



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FOREWORD

The ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality (ACCSQ) has endeavored to harmonise standards as one of the means to support the establishment of an integrated market. The task of overseeing the harmonisation undertaken by its product working groups is assigned to Working Group 1 on Standards and Mutual Recognition Arrangements (WG 1). The ASEAN Guidelines for Harmonisation of Standards were prepared by WG 1 in order to ensure that a common and consistent approach to harmonisation of standards is adopted by the product working groups under the ACCSQ. This document defines the roles of the parties involved in the harmonisation process. The document was developed through deliberations between ASEAN Member States managed by WG 1. The Guidelines clarify existing practices and arrangements and are intended to serve as a reference to the product working groups and also for national standards bodies of ASEAN Member States. The ASEAN Guidelines for Harmonisation of Standards was endorsed by the ACCSQ at its 42nd ACCSQ Meeting held in Yangon, Myanmar from 22 to 17th September 2014.

Chair

ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards and Quality, April 23rd 2015

ASEAN Guidelines for Harmonisation of Standards

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The establishment of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is reliant on harmonised standards. The harmonisation is undertaken to enable the removal of technical barriers to trade, especially when such barriers arise due to differences in standards referenced in technical regulations and used for mandatory conformity assessment procedures.
- 1.2. The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) Blueprint in Article 19 calls upon ASEAN Member States (AMSs) to “Harmonise standards, technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures through their alignment with international practices”. Chapter 7 of the ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement (ATIGA) requires AMSs to harmonise their national standards with international standards as a means of removing unnecessary trade barriers.
- 1.3. These Guidelines elaborate on the provisions that address harmonisation of standards as contained in the ASEAN Guideline on Standards, Technical Regulations and Conformity Assessment procedures (AG-STRACAP). It provides guidance to AMSs for facilitating the implementation of the provisions of the AG-STRACAP.
- 1.4. Taking into consideration the decision in the AEC Blueprint with regards to the importance of external trade to ASEAN and the need for the ASEAN Community as a whole to remain outward looking, the approach adopted in these Guidelines is consistent with the AG-STRACAP, in that harmonisation is reliant on international standards and practices. ASEAN has taken a decision not to establish an additional layer of standardisation between national standards and international standards and not to publish unique ASEAN Regional Standards, but instead rely on existing international standardisation platforms.
- 1.5. As all AMSs are members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the provisions of Article 4.1 of the WTO Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement apply and national standards bodies are obliged to adopt the Code of Good Practice for the *Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards (Annex 3 of WTO/TBT Agreement)*.

2. Terms & Definitions

- 2.1. Definitions for Standards, Technical Regulations and Conformity Assessment Procedures have meaning as the definitions contained in the WTO/TBT Agreement.
- 2.2. Definitions for the adoption (of standards), technical deviation have the same meaning as contained in ISO/IEC Guide 21-1:2005 Regional or national adoption of International Standards and other International Deliverables Part 1: Adoption of International Standards.
- 2.3. International standards are standards that are developed in accordance with the TBT Committee’s *“Decision of the Committee on the principles for the development of international standards, guides and recommendations with relation to articles 2, 5, and Annex 3 of the WTO/TBT Agreement”*¹.

¹ G/TBT/1/Rev.10 Decisions and Recommendations Adopted By the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade since January 1 JANUARY 1995.

3. Objectives and Scope

- 3.1. These Guidelines on the harmonisation of standards are established and implemented to define a consistent, effective and sustainable programme for harmonisation of standards. They apply to all ASEAN sectors and should be adopted by all AMSs. These Guidelines define the:
- a. Scope of the harmonisation programme;
 - b. Approaches adopted for the harmonisation of standards;
 - c. Authority and processes for selection standards to be harmonised;
 - d. Responsibilities and roles of the ASEAN Consultative Committee on Standards & Quality (ACCSQ), its subcommittees and working groups, and of ASEAN National Standards Bodies (NSB) regarding the harmonisation of standards within ASEAN;
 - e. Guidelines for the maintenance of a listing of harmonised standards;
 - f. Guidelines for the publication of standards that have been harmonised, associated information on the scope of application and the sourcing of copies; and
 - g. Requirement that standards committees be established in AMSs to support harmonisation.

4. Guidelines

- 4.1. Standards selected for harmonisation include:
- a. Standards that are referenced in technical regulations and that support ASEAN mutual recognition arrangements, harmonised regulatory regimes and other initiatives or instruments that remove technical barriers to trade or are relevant to the establishment and maintenance of the ASEAN single market and production base, and
 - b. Standards that are used in ASEAN for non-regulated products by industry and other stakeholders. These may be harmonised when they serve the achievement of the AEC objective of the free flow of goods and the establishment a single production base in ASEAN.
- 4.2. The harmonisation of standards which are referenced in technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures associated with the ASEAN mutual recognition arrangements and the ASEAN harmonised regulatory regimes will be assigned a higher priority in plans for harmonisation.
- 4.3. The product working groups shall continue to identify additional priority areas for harmonisation of standards within their respective sectors. In addition to providing the highest priority for standards directly referenced in ASEAN harmonised regulatory regimes' MRAs, the following factors should guide the establishment of priority for other standards to be harmonised:
- a. The anticipated impact in terms of reducing trade barriers and increasing intra ASEAN trade.

- b. The value of existing intra ASEAN trade in goods related to the standard.
 - c. The interests of AMSs and their stakeholders to establish a harmonised standard.
 - d. The feasibility of harmonisation, based on factors such as the availability of international standards, the absence of major differences between standards of AMSs and other factors such as decided by the relevant ASEAN Body.
- 4.4. ACCSQ and its subcommittees and working groups may establish programmes and undertake the harmonisation of national standards that are intended for voluntary use to support plans for market integration, as appropriate. This harmonisation should be in accordance with the provisions of Clause F², Annex 3 of the WTO TBT Agreement, and, in particular, from Annex 3, the: Code of Good Practice for the Preparation; and Adoption and Application of Standards. The method of harmonisation shall be based on the guidance provided in Article 74 of ATIGA and the AG-STRACAP.
- 4.5. A publicly available register of “ASEAN Harmonised Standards” will be established. Publicly available procedures will govern the processes for inclusion, updating and withdrawal of standards from this register. The register will provide information that identifies the sources from which copies of the each listed standard can be obtained.

The register shall designate the harmonised standards into two categories:

Category I: Standards that are referenced in ASEAN MRAs, harmonised regulatory regimes and other initiatives or instruments adopted by ASEAN to remove technical barriers to trade. Mandatory compliance to these standards will usually be required by Member States’ legislation;

Category II: Standards for non-regulated products.

- 4.6. The identification of standards to be used as the basis for harmonisation in ASEAN will be based on international standards and practices. In the absence of international standards and practices, the following standards, which are widely used in ASEAN, should be considered (not in any order of priority):
- a. The Standard of an AMS.
 - b. Other non-ASEAN regional or national standards from non-ASEAN regions.
 - c. Publicly available standards published by a standards body that has accepted the Code of Good Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Standards provided in Annex 3 of the WTO TBT agreement.
- 4.7. In event that a suitable international standard or other standard cannot be identified, the subcommittee or working group may take a decision to initiate the development of a new international standard with a view of harmonisation on the basis of the newly developed standard. In this case, one or more national standards body of an AMS shall be selected to submit a proposal for the development of a new standard to the appropriate international standards body in accordance with the rules of the international body concerned. All AMS should endeavour to participate in the development of the specific standard.
- 4.8. AMSs shall adopt the harmonised standard as identical standards (IDT), unless a decision

² Annex 3, F. Where international standards exist or their completion is imminent, the standardizing body shall use them, or the relevant parts of them, as a basis for the standards it develops, except where such international standards or relevant parts would be ineffective or inappropriate, for instance, because of an insufficient level of protection or fundamental climatic or geographical factors or fundamental technological problems.

for harmonisation is based on adopting the standards with modifications as permitted by ISO/IEC Guide 21. In such a case, the modifications shall be clearly identified. AMSs shall adopt and publish the international standard as modified standards (MOD) with the same modifications.

- 4.9. Upon identification of a standard as a Category I ASEAN Harmonised Standard, the national standards bodies in each AMS will either adopt the harmonised standard as the national standard or otherwise declare that direct reference to the harmonised standard in relevant national technical regulations or conformity assessment procedures. The NSB in each AMS will take all necessary action to ensure that all existing national standards with the same scope are promptly withdrawn.
- 4.10. Upon identification of a standard as a Category II ASEAN Harmonised Standard, AMSs are encouraged to adopt the harmonised standards without modification as the national standard and take all necessary action to withdraw existing national standards with the same scope.
- 4.11. The ACCSQ shall oversee the implementation of the Guidelines for the Harmonisation of Standards. Working Group 1 shall coordinate and monitor the implementation, as well as the activities undertaken for the harmonisation of standards within ASEAN with the support of the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC). The scope of monitoring shall include standards developed by all ASEAN working groups and committees, including standards intended for voluntary use and those intended for mandatory adoption. Working Group 1, with the support of the ASEC, should contact all the working groups every six month to receive updates on the harmonisation work undertaken.
- 4.12. The decisions on the identification of standards for harmonisation shall be undertaken by the subcommittee or product working group responsible for the respective sector, MRA or harmonised regulatory regime. The decision should be taken in accordance with the rules of the particular subcommittee or working group concerned and these Guidelines. Any standard that has been identified for harmonisation by the group shall be notified to the Chair of Working Group 1, the Chair of ACCSQ and the ASEC. The notification should include the following Information:
 - a. Number, full title, date of publication, edition, standards body responsible, for the standard;
 - b. Information on how to obtain copies of the standard;
 - c. Effective date of harmonisation;
 - d. Details related to the MRA, Harmonised regulatory scheme or relevant other instruments; and
 - e. Information on the intended purpose of the standard.
- 4.13. The subcommittee or working group responsible shall review the validity of the harmonised standard on a periodic basis that does not exceed 5 years.
- 4.14. The ACCSQ shall appoint the ASEC³ to establish and maintain an on-line register of all ASEAN harmonised standards. The register shall be publicly accessible. The ASEC will name the

³ Working Group 1 with the endorsement of the ACCSQ should decide on the management of the register. The register could be hosted by an AMS or by the ASEC.

official responsible and assign adequate resources to ensure that the register is updated on a monthly basis. The register⁴ shall contain all the information as defined in paragraphs 10(i)-(v).

- 4.15. National Standards Bodies of AMSs shall notify Working Group 1 of the harmonised standards that have been republished as national standards every six months. The details of national republication shall be noted in the register of harmonised standards. The AMSs that publish the ASEAN Harmonised Standards in their respective working languages shall be notify Working Group 1 of the availability of such versions and this shall be noted in the register of harmonised standards.
- 4.16. All National Standards Bodies of AMSs shall provide a hyperlink to the register of ASEAN Harmonised Standards on their official websites.
- 4.17. Users of ASEAN harmonised standards shall be invited to provide feedback and comments on the standards. The feedback and comments shall be brought to the attention of Working Group 1 and the particular working group responsible for consideration.

Annex 1

Database of Harmonised ASEAN Standards

- a. Number, full title, date of publication, edition, standards body responsible, for the standard;
- b. Information on how to obtain copies of the standard;
- c. Effective date of harmonisation;
- d. Details related to the MRA, Harmonised regulatory scheme or relevant other instruments; and
- e. Information on the intended purpose of the standard.

ASEAN Reference Number ¹	Original Document Reference ² .	Title ³	Standards Body ⁴	Edition/ Year of publication ⁵	Date of Harmonisation in ASEAN ⁶	MRA/Harmonised Regulatory Scheme ⁷ .	Intended purpose ⁸

Notes:

1. A unique numbering system to be established to identify ASEAN Harmonised Standards.
2. The original reference number as determined by the standards body publishing the standard.
3. The original title of the standard.
4. The identification of the standards body that publishes the harmonised standard.
5. The year of publication and/or the edition that is adopted for harmonisation.
6. The effective date on which ASEAN recognises the standard as a harmonised standard.
7. The relevant MRA or harmonised regulatory scheme that references the standards in relevant

⁴ The information fields that the register should contain are as described in the Annex to this document.

technical regulations.

8. The intended purpose – defining test methods, product requirements, etc.



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