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DIN Contribution to ISO/IEC JTC 1 N 5757

Request for National Body Input on Strategic Planning

In response to the JTC 1 request as of resolution 32 of the Rio de Janeiro Plenary meeting, DIN wishes to contribute the following thoughts:

1. Basic observations

The following fundamental trends in JTC 1 and the environment in which it operates, can be observed (note: no significance is attached to the order below):

1. A significant reduction in number of experts contributing to the work in the SCs, though this may vary from SC to SC.
2. A lack of ground braking new projects in JTC 1.
3. An increasing number of consortia being established outside of JTC 1, to do highly innovative work which can be considered as within the remit of JTC 1.
4. A reluctance of industry to submit innovative work to JTC 1 (see Java, and also the experiences of the JTC 1 Business Team on Electronic Commerce).

2. Interpretation

Many reasons for the above trends can possibly be given. Of these, the most commonly heard is the perception that international standardization is slow, bureaucratic and does not meet market demands, and, hence, industry uses other mechanisms, such as consortia, to establish the necessary consensus on a particular specification. We recognize that, to some extent, this argument may be valid; but in our view, it does not meet the true point which DIN believes is the following: to what extent does the market need International Standards (IS) from JTC 1 at all and where can the requirements of the market also – or even better – be met by other types of specifications which originate from other consensus building environments?

We attempt to offer some answers to this question, but recognize that they are controversial and certainly not exhaustive. JTC 1 has a number of SCs which we consider fairly successful in establishing International Standards with a broad acceptance in the market. Among those are SC 17, SC 27, SC 29 and SC 31. An analysis of the characteristics of such SCs, both in terms of technical domains and constituency, leads to the following conclusions: International Standards are most appropriate relative to consortia specifications where:

- the technical domain is mainly of an infrastructural nature and competing technologies would confuse rather than further the market (see the well known VHS/Beta example), (SC 17, SC 27, SC 29); and/or
- the constituency of market actors is very broad, both in terms of geographic coverage as well as in number and size of players; in other words: where many companies and not only the big, but also small and medium size ones, are interested and affected by the standard, and where

not a single company or country/ region dominates the relevant technology (SC 29, SC 31); and/or

- public interest, represented by, e.g., governmental agencies or consumers, is affected (SC27).

International standards play in many countries a prominent role in the domain of public procurement. The WTO TBT Agreement requires that international standards are used as a basis for technical regulation and encourages signatories to participate in the preparation of such standards. Further, International Standards are most appropriate where cultural and linguistic aspects are considered or, generally, a broad community of end users is affected.

Conversely, consortia are the preferred instrument for consensus building where:

- the choice among competing technologies can readily be left to the market; and/or
- a group of industry actors does not want to share a particular technology with the public, but only with a limited number of other companies; and/or
- there are economic reasons for the technology owner(s) not to abide by the strict IPR rules of International Standardization, but, rather, to aim at full commercial exploitation of the technology; and/or
- only a limited number of companies is affected by a given technology.

Note: Such reasons are given without any further judgement.

3. Proposed orientations for the future strategy of JTC 1

The overall conclusion from the above is that there are good reasons for International Standardization and there are good reasons for consortia. It is important that JTC 1 recognizes this and builds its future strategy on it, rather than attempting to compete with consortia. In other words: JTC 1 should:

- Recognize the existence of consortia and the valuable contribution they can make to the promotion of the information society;
- Recognize its own strengths
 - in infrastructural domains;
 - where a very heterogeneous constituency exists;
 - where the public interest is affected, i.e. where actors other than industry should be directly involved, such as governmental agencies, consumers;
 - where cultural differences have to be taken into account,and concentrate its activities in such domains.
- Further improve the co-operation with consortia where a need exists, by establishing a policy of open invitations to consortia.

Hence, the following orientations of JTC 1 are proposed:

1. JTC 1 acknowledges that the implementation of the Global Information Society requires standards and specifications of different qualities and different level of consensus. Therefore, the future infrastructure for standardization will be a network of cooperating standards bodies, consortia/fora and other specification developing organizations.

2. The main product of JTC 1 are International Standards with their specific qualities and with a level of consensus based on a public inquiry. JTC 1 has to investigate carefully the fields and scopes where International Standards are essential. For these fields, JTC 1 has to provide the requested International Standards with further improved efficiency. Fast Track and PAS Transposition are proven processes for co-operation with consortia and other specification developers.

3. Reducing effort and time is a permanent challenge in a competitive environment.

JTC 1 has to continue its measures to increase efficiency and to streamline procedures. The measures have to maintain the quality and the level of consensus of JTC 1's main product – the International Standard. This is the real challenge and task for JTC 1: to develop procedures and methods of working which use all advantages of the Global Information Infrastructure and new media for development and distribution of its main product, but at the same time to maintain the quality and the level of consensus of International Standards.

The implementation of 1. to 3. above should have the highest priority for JTC 1. JTC 1 has to settle its field of activities and to prove that it can provide International Standards in this field efficiently and within the requested time frame.

DIN is concerned that any attempt of JTC 1 to compete as a developer of specifications with flexible consortia by giving up or reducing the quality or level of consensus of International Standards, will ultimately will not be successful and, instead, will negatively affect JTC 1's credibility.

4. Considerations for JTC 1's operation

Based on the above strategic orientation of JTC 1, the aspects below need further consideration.

- **Products of JTC 1**

JTC 1 should investigate whether or not it is useful and helpful for JTC 1 to offer also specifications with a reduced level of consensus, e.g. a specification for which consensus is established at SC level.

- **Membership of / participation in JTC 1**

While the membership of and participation in JTC 1 should, in principle, be as open as possible, practical considerations need also to be taken into account. It has to be assured that the standards development and ratification process is as smooth and fast as possible, without any unnecessary surprises and set-backs at any stage. If the membership constituents at technical and at ratification level differ significantly, this can certainly not be assured and, hence, the overall efficiency of the JTC 1 process is at risk. Therefore, DIN does, at this time, not support a model of direct participation at technical level; instead, we suggest that the instrument of external liaison is used appropriately to allow other parties to contribute to and influence the ongoing work.

- **Operation at technical level**

The role of the technical bodies (SCs and WGs) in JTC 1 needs to be strengthened in the sense that, once a project has been approved by JTC 1, its execution is fully left to the SC's responsibility, but that the SC at the same time is held accountable for its operations and that projects having passed their scheduled target dates, can easily be cancelled.

JTC 1 SCs are asked to ensure that their standards projects and deliverables are meeting the requirements of the market. Business Plans and the process to establish New Projects should in this context be seen as measures to support the SCs rather than as bureaucratic requirements. SCs are expected to operate in close contact with all market actors, i.e. industry and end users, understand/anticipate the technical evolution in their technical direction and cooperate, using the appropriate instruments, with other related standards organizations and relevant consortia/fora.

The decision of the 13th JTC 1 Plenary Meeting to spend more time and attention to the reports of Technical Directions and SCs during the Plenary Meeting is an appropriate action to support efficient operation at technical level. As a further step, we propose that JTC 1 should establish a group of independent experts, whose task is to evaluate the reports of the TDs/SCs (with particular consideration of the technical state of the art and the perceived market requirements in the given domain) and to give a co-report during the Plenary.

Further, the formation of inter-SC working entities should be encouraged where appropriate to allow for taking account of the multi-disciplinary nature of many work items.

The Fast Track and PAS processes are considered helpful to adopt proven technologies quickly as International Standards and therefore these processes should remain in place.

- **Project Management**

It is obvious that full project management has to be introduced in the SCs and their Working Groups. While it is often argued that international standardization lives from voluntary contributions and, hence, no strict project management can be executed, we are convinced that at the beginning of a project, firm and reliable commitments of all those interested to participate can and must be available. JTC 1 has to make clear to its participants that contributing to standardization is not a donation but an obligation. It is important to stress that the relevance of a standardization project can be directly measured by the amount of contributions received for this project.

In order to help project managers and secretariats to consistently apply project management, JTC 1 should select an appropriate software tool and make it broadly available.

- **Financial considerations**

Currently, financing of JTC 1's work is done at several levels:

- All participants bear their own costs,
- The costs of an international secretariat are borne by the national body which holds this secretariat; this financial burden is accompanied by the right of the secretariat to propose a chairperson for the technical unit. We understand that currently such burden is not equally distributed among the JTC 1 membership and that reasons may exist for a change. We offer the following considerations for this problem:
 - The possibility exists that several NBs share the costs of an international secretariat. This, however, should be organized among such NBs, and JTC 1 should not be actively involved in such process, but should only be kept informed about the fact of such cost sharing. As regards the right to propose a chairperson, it is a matter of the group of NBs to resolve this aspect among themselves.
 - We are not sympathetic about JTC 1 collecting fees for funding an international secretariat, as this puts an administrative burden on JTC 1 itself and, hence, detracts from its core tasks.
- The costs of an international meeting are borne by the host of such meeting, with the possibility to collect - under certain conditions - attendance fees. DIN does not see the need for a change of this approach.

- **Electronic working methods**

JTC 1 has already made significant progress in applying electronic working methods, and we highly welcome such achievements. We are, however, convinced, that further progress can be made in this domain. In particular, with the broad global availability of inexpensive tools, it should, in future, be requested from all participants at all working levels that access to such tools exists. This will help to significantly reduce meeting and travelling costs, both for participants and for international secretariats, and it will speed up the development process.

Development of electronic working methods should not be seen as a simple replacement of manual/mechanic methods by electronic methods. JTC 1 should develop new working methods, making full use of the new possibilities of information technology, information infrastructure and WWW with all their revolutionary applications - with the only restriction that the specific characteristics and qualities of the consensus-based standardization process and of (formal) standards have to be maintained.