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# Information Technology

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## **JTC 1: MARKET TRIAL PROJECT TEAM (MTPT)**

### **Summary of conclusions of the meeting in Washington D.C. on 9 March 2001**

The Market Trial Project Team (JTC 1: MTPT) members were fully supportive of all efforts to take well-considered actions to reach the end goal that all ISO/IEC IT standards be very easily accessible to all parties with an interest in using them and/or participating in the ISO/IEC JTC 1 work. And, that all such customers and stakeholders should have access to JTC 1 documents at a cost that can not be considered to be seriously high or prohibitively for any of the realistic market players, including, *inter alia*, users and potential users in Universities and Colleges both in developing and more highly industrialized countries.

At the same time, ISO and IEC Governing bodies need to be fully aware and clearly understand that undertaking a market trial in which the unit price of a significant set of ISO/IEC products (in this case JTC 1 standards) would be significantly lowered (proposed to be on the order of CHF 40 compared to the current average price of CHF 120) is not an inconsequential matter. The consequences of this market trial on revenue flows to ISO/IEC, and to the members of ISO and IEC could be highly significant as the market trial progresses.

Three subsets of the JTC 1 collection have been proposed for consideration for the market trial: JTC 1 has proposed that standards from three of its subcommittees be considered as the trial subset (about 650 standards); the ISO/CS has proposed a subset (some 165 standards) where a reasonably high output of new standards is anticipated for 2001/2002; and ANSI has proposed a smaller subset with lower sales expectation to reduce the financial risks of the trial for the member bodies.

The preponderance of anecdotal information now available from the most commercially active ISO members bodies implies that in most cases lower prices by themselves do not increase market demand for any standards under consideration (supporting references are from ANSI for the programming language C++ in particular, and also from AFNOR, BSI, DIN, SAI and UNI for ISO standards in general). The prevailing "marketing wisdom" is that pricing, as long as it is within reason, is of little importance in determining the volume of sales for one standard or another.

Therefore, it is recommended that additional time is needed to study and agree upon the most appropriate parameters for the JTC 1 market trial project that was accepted, in principle, by the ISO Council and later endorsed by the IEC Council Board. In particular, sales revenue data in 2000 for JTC 1 standards, both as original publications and as national adoptions, and for the three subsets of JTC 1 standards under consideration, needs to be compiled and considered; and this will be

done within the next month (end March 2001) by the members bodies represented on the market trial team.

Such data is necessary to assess the risks of significant revenue declines if, for example, lowered prices would not increase the customer base and a new pricing policy would simply result in less revenues to the ISO/CS and ISO member bodies. First estimates imply that this risk is not insignificant, e.g. the gross revenues for sales of JTC 1 standards from the ISO/CS in Geneva were a little more than kCHF 1 000 (out of some kCHF 8 800 in 2000).

Until now, there have not been many specific and concrete proposals for developing “new revenue generating products” from the ISO JTC 1 collection; and as a result the risk of not having such products to introduce “simultaneously” with lowered unit prices for individual standards is high. It is also true that neither the ISO/CS nor the major member bodies have in house competence to develop and introduce such “new products” – such competence would have to be supplied by the JTC 1 community.

Further, there may be scope, in the JTC 1 environment, to experiment with alternative pricing schemes and policies, that is to say pricing schemes not as much dependent on pages (the commodity weight approach), and more dependent on expected informational value to customers. This matter also needs further study and is not at all an easy subject to tackle.

It is therefore the intention of the ISO Secretary-General, supported by the IEC General Secretary, that the JTC 1 Market Trial Project Team continue its preparatory work until such time as the parameters, risks and benefits of the trial can be more clearly characterized. This should be possible within the next few months and a firm proposal as the nature and timing of the market trial could be ready for Council endorsement in September 2001.