ISO IEC

GUIDE 14

Purchase information on goods and services intended for consumers

Second edition 2003

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

Draft Guides adopted by the responsible Committee or Group are circulated to national bodies for voting. Publication as a Guide requires approval by at least 75 % of the national bodies casting a vote.

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.

ISO/IEC Guide 14 was prepared by the ISO Committee on consumer policy (COPOLCO).

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO/IEC Guide 14:1977), which has been technically revised.

Introduction

This Guide is one of several on aspects of consumer information. Its primary purpose is to advise those responsible for drafting national or International Standards as to what information prospective purchasers (whether of products or services) require and expect. It may also assist those who write purchase information, as well as enforcement authorities.

This Guide is relevant to all methods by which products and services are offered to consumers, including distance selling and sales by electronic media.

Information for consumers is a vital part of any product or service. Improving the quality of information increases consumers' ability to make a reasoned choice at the point of purchase. It helps to minimize risk of incorrect or inappropriate purchases or contracts. Consumer uncertainties are reduced and consumer satisfaction is increased. Those who supply a high standard of consumer information enhance their commercial reputation, and save time and money by reducing enquiries and complaints.

This Guide is concerned with those instances where the information is based in general on standards approved or recognized by ISO, IEC and national or regional standards bodies

There is considerable scope for further standardization in the field of consumer information in terms of individual products and services, and even more so for groups of products and services. The material in Annex A illustrates how individual and vertical standards might be related in a consistent and systematic manner to horizontal standards for groups of products or services, with both types of standard employing the principles set out in this Guide.

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1 Scope

This Guide is applicable to the provision of information concerning products and services before purchase. It outlines general principles and recommendations for contents, methods, formats and design such that the information will enable consumers to compare and choose products or services. Furthermore, the Guide recommends general rules for the creation and implementation of purchase information systems and purchase information bodies.

It is addressed to the following:

— committees preparing standards for consumer products or services;

— product designers, manufacturers, technical writers or others engaged in the work of drafting such information, and, in particular, those who are members of purchase information bodies;

— other bodies such as enforcement agencies or consumer ombudsmen.

This Guide does not deal with conformity assessment or instructions for use. It does not give detailed guidance on information that is provided verbally or electronically.