

Standards

ISO – INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION

International standards

Introduction

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) is a non-governmental organisation composed of national standardisation bodies from 161 countries. It develops voluntary international standards and other deliverables covering a very wide range of sectors. ISO has its Central Secretariat in Geneva, Switzerland.

ISO cooperates with CEN (European Committee for Standardisation) under the so-called Vienna agreement. Based on this technical cooperation, European standards developed by CEN can be turned into ISO standards.

Relevance for the hospitality industry

A Technical Committee within ISO (TC 228) covers “Tourism and related” services. Accommodation and catering services are included in the scope.

State of progress

On the proposal of the Spanish standardisation body (AENOR), ISO established in 2005 TC 228 to develop standards for tourism and related services, including hospitality activities. Since the first plenary meeting (Tunis, March 2006) the national standardisation bodies, members of the Committee, have been unable to find a consensus on its scope. After two years, several votes by correspondence and controversial resolutions, the Business Plan of TC 228 was approved in September 2007. Notwithstanding the sustained opposition of the vast majority of the European hospitality industry, the Business Plan confirmed a wide-reaching scope for the works of TC 228, including accommodation and catering services. The only limitation introduced by a resolution of the ISO Technical Management Board (TMB) is that: *“the initial Business Plan covering the period until 2010 comprises only those work items where there is a known support amongst the stakeholders”*.

In the meantime, standardisation activities within TC 228 are multiplying. There are currently seven working groups (WG) active within TC 228.

- WG 1: on diving services
- WG 2: Health tourism services (medical spa; wellness spa; thalassotherapy services)
- WG 3: Tourist information and reception services in tourism information offices
- WG 4: Golf services
- WG 5: Beach services
- WG 6: Natural protected areas
- WG 7: Adventure tourism

The Business Plan of TC 228 is to be reviewed in 2010.

HOTREC position

HOTREC, which has a Liaison status (with no voting right) within TC 228, has been advocating since years that hospitality services should be out of the scope of the standardisation works. As a matter of fact, there is presently no support from the vast majority of the European hospitality industry for the development of ISO standards which would concern services provided by its businesses.

The need for standardisation of services, in particular hospitality services, is not as obvious as it is for goods. This is very different from goods where, for instance, the diameter of a tap must correspond exactly to the diameter of the tube it has to adjust to. Heterogeneity is a main competitive feature for the hospitality industry.

High quality services are crucial for the hospitality industry but standards developed at European or international level at the initiative of standardisation bodies are not a necessary prerequisite for quality.

HOTREC, which is not against standards “per se”, maintains that standardisation bodies should not take any initiatives without the support of the industry. The development of standards should remain fully market-driven; the role of the standardisation bodies should be to assist with methodology and logistics only in cases where the industry would desire a specific standard.

Furthermore, HOTREC has strong concerns on the lack of proper consultation of the sector at international level, with regard to all sorts of new projects relating to standardisation in the field of tourism and, more particularly, the hospitality industry. HOTREC is of the opinion that the ISO decision-making process lacks transparency and that ISO rules do not allow a fair and balanced representation of industry stakeholders.

See also:

HOTREC updated [position paper](#) of November 2009 on standards at European and International level

HOTREC [position](#) on the proposal for ISO standards on “Environmentally friendly accommodation establishments”, 15 April 2009

HOTREC [position](#) on the proposal for ISO standards on “Management of safety and security in the tourism industry”, 26 March 2009

HOTREC [comments](#) on ISO TC 228 Resolutions C/47/48/49/2008 on spa services, 18 March 2008

HOTREC [comments](#) on the ISO TC 228 Resolution C/34/2007 on Business Plan Draft 4, July 2007

HOTREC [Resolution](#) on the newly created ISO TC 228 on tourism and related services, April 2006

Official references

Report on the draft Resolution ISO TC 228 C34/2007 (adoption of Business Plan Draft 4) - N 105, 6 September 2007

ISO TC 228 Business Plan Draft 4 - N 98, 20 July 2007

ISO TMB Resolution 14/2007 on the scope of TC 228 “Tourism and related services” – N 75, 12 February 2007

See also:

ISO [website](#) on TC 228

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