



GEN POSITION ON THE ISO 14024 GUIDANCE STANDARD

The Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN) is a non-profit association of twenty-five (i.e. most) third-party, environmental performance leadership labelling and certification -- "ecolabelling" -- member organizations from around the world. These organizations set criteria for, certify, and provide a label for use in association with, products and services with lower environmental burdens and impacts than comparable products/services with the same functions. [As of November 2002, two "associate" organizations also formally participate in GEN. While these organizations are not ecolabelling practitioners, they are strong allies and supporters of the objectives and activities of GEN and its members.] In accordance with its objective to promote and advance ecolabelling internationally, GEN officials represent the interests of ecolabelling in various international fora, and provide information/technical assistance to developing programs.

Of the GEN members, all but two were functional prior to the start of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) development work on "*ISO 14024: Environmental labels and declarations - Type 1 environmental labelling - Principles and procedures*". Throughout the ISO standard development process, GEN officials have actively participated and provided useful and substantial input, with the GEN recognized and welcomed formally as an "'A" External Liaison Organization'. At the same time, numerous individual GEN member officials have served as technical experts and key participants on their respective national ISO delegations.

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"*Type I environmental labelling*" is defined by ISO officials, as:

"a voluntary, multiple-criteria based, third party program that awards a license which authorizes the use of environmental labels on products indicating overall environmental preferability of a product within a particular product category based on life cycle considerations."

It is evident that the ISO Guidance Standard was developed with the intention of being pertinent to existing and planned ecolabelling systems. Given the strong correlation between the focus of the Standard and the "practice of ecolabelling", the GEN and its members, besides providing practical and insightful input to the ISO standard development process, have strived to make good use of the document since its publication. In this regard, GEN officials have deemed it appropriate and useful to recognize the Principles contained in the Standard as a "code of good practice" to guide ecolabelling program designers, developers, managers and operators. In fact, a major condition of GEN membership is that a representative of an ecolabelling organization must affirm that his/her organization:

"...conforms to the GEN conditions of membership set forth in the GEN By-Laws..., and is striving to comply with the guiding principles outlined in International Organization for Standardization (ISO) voluntary standard ISO 14024..."

Of further note, a "Self-Assessment of Conformity with ISO 14024" exercise, which was voluntarily undertaken by GEN members in 2002, identified quite strong cumulative conformity with the ISO Guiding Principles (and Procedures).

While GEN officials see considerable value in the guidance provided by the ISO 14024 Principles, they also place great value on the GEN's own "Conditions of Membership", and the "Code of Good Practice" contained in the World Trade Organization's (WTO's) Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement. Broadly speaking, ecolabelling practitioners are striving to design, manage and operate systems and programs in ways that are recognized as legitimate, credible, practical, and appropriate by stakeholders and other observers.

With the routine review of the Standard scheduled to occur in the near future, GEN officials have discussed and considered the value and appropriateness of contemplating and undertaking revisions to the Standard. Having completed the "Self-Assessment of Conformity" exercise, GEN members and officials deem the current version quite acceptable and appropriate for the guidance purposes that it is intended. For this reason, GEN officials advise against, and discourage any revisions to the Standard.