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Environmental statements and programmes for products — Mutual recognition of environmental product declarations (EPDs) and footprint communication programmes

Déclarations environnementales et programmes pour les produits — Reconnaissance mutuelle des déclarations environnementales de produits (DEP) et des programmes de communication d'empreinte

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ISO copyright office
CP 401 • Ch. de Blandonnet 8
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva
Phone: +41 22 749 01 11
Email: copyright@iso.org
Website: www.iso.org

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Foreword

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The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

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This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 207, *Environmental management*, Subcommittee SC 3, *Environmental labelling*.

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Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

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Introduction

This document is a part of the ISO 14020 family of standards. There are various environmental communication programmes around the world including product declarations and footprints. ISO 14025, ISO 14026 and ISO/TS 14027 relate to developing environmental product declarations (EPDs) and footprint communication programmes, and include both administrative duties as well as technical work. However, because there are no standards for mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs) as recommended in ISO 14025 and ISO 14026, programme operators need guidance to manage their programmes in accordance with these standards.

NOTE ISO 14065:2020, 3.3.3, introduces the term "programme owner" as a "person or organization responsible for developing and maintaining an environmental information programme". A programme owner can also be the scheme owner, i.e. a programme operator. For the purpose of this document, the term "programme operator" is used as having full operational control of the programme.

This document provides principles and procedures for establishing MRAs between EPDs and footprint communication programmes. When applied by EPD and footprint communication programme operators, this document will ensure that such arrangements follow the requirements in accordance with ISO 14025, ISO 14026 and ISO/TS 14027.

This document covers all types of footprint communication programmes. Currently, two International Standards address footprints: ISO 14046 on water footprints and ISO 14067 on carbon footprints.

MRAs are mainly intended to promote various ways of cooperation for harmonization between EPD and footprint communication programmes with a specific ambition to make better use of available product category rules (PCR) and reduce the risk for proliferation of PCR on the market for the same product categories. They can consider collaboration in a local or regional context relevant to the area where EPDs and footprints are being marketed and used for various applications aiming at:

a) enhanced cooperation and communication between programme operators that raises the quality of supporting information for decision-making, aiming to reduce potential environmental impacts from consumption and production;

b) increased comparability and reliability of EPDs and footprints provided from different programmes;

c) provision of different approaches for cooperation to facilitate market assessment and evaluation of EPD and footprint communication programmes.

This document is intended to ensure that MRAs between EPD and footprint communication programmes, regardless of the programme stage of development, emerging or fully established, have to follow the same principles and procedures.

The anticipated benefit is the harmonization of the process of MRAs between EPD and footprint communication programmes, leading to a structured and cost-effective way of cooperation.

MRAs between EPD and footprint communication programme operators aim to improve the environmental performance of products. They are also intended to improve cost-effectiveness by offering companies to avoid duplicate verification of similar EPD or footprint communication programmes on common markets. Therefore, EPD and footprint communication programme operators should fully understand the intent of the MRA to achieve this goal and meet all the standards and procedures established for the MRA.

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Environmental statements and programmes for products — Mutual recognition of environmental product declarations (EPDs) and footprint communication programmes

1 Scope

This document specifies requirements for mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs) and gives guidance on how to initiate developments on MRAs between environmental product declaration (EPD) and footprint communication programme operators. It addresses administrative and operational duties, through evaluation of such programmes, and how to externally communicate the results of the cooperation as well as plans for future related activities.

This document is primarily applicable to MRAs but can also be a basis for bilateral agreements.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 14025:2006, *Environmental labels and declarations — Type III environmental declarations — Principles and procedures*

ISO 14026:2017, *Environmental labels and declarations — Principles, requirements and guidelines for communication of footprint information*

ISO/TS 14027:2017, *Environmental labels and declarations — Development of product category rules*

ISO/IEC 17030, *Conformity assessment — General requirements for third-party marks of conformity*

ISO/IEC 17040:2005, *Conformity assessment — General requirements for peer assessment of conformity assessment bodies and accreditation bodies*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at https://www.electropedia.org/

3.1
administrative duty
task or action administratively required for the operation of an *environmental product declaration* (3.11) and *footprint communication* (3.17) programme

3.2
operational duty
task or action of the *programme operator* (3.10) performed to demonstrate the conformity of the operation of an *environmental product declaration* (3.11) and *footprint communication* (3.17) programme

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3.3
dual registration
registration of an *environmental product declaration* (3.11) or footprint statement based on the same principles and procedures and indicated by carrying the logotypes of the cooperating environmental product declaration and *footprint communication* (3.17) *programme operator* (3.10)

3.4
general programme instructions
GPI
guidelines for the operation of an *environmental product declaration* (3.11) or *footprint communication* (3.17) programme

3.5
interested party
person or a body interested in, or affected by, the development and use of an *environmental product declaration* (3.11) and *footprint* (3.16)

Note 1 to entry: To "perceive itself to be affected" means the perception has been made known to the *programme operator* (3.10).

Note 2 to entry: The interested parties for *environmental statement* (3.12) programmes may include, but are not limited to, material suppliers, manufacturers, trade associations, purchasers, users, consumers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), public agencies and, when relevant, independent parties and certification bodies.

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3.6
product category
group of products that can fulfil equivalent functions

[SOURCE: ISO 14025:2006, 3.12]

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3.7
product category rules
PCR
set of specific rules, requirements and guidelines for developing Type III environmental declarations for one or more *product categories* (3.6)

[SOURCE: ISO 14025:2006, 3.5]

3.8
programme dossier
collection of all documents relevant for duties to be carried out by an *environmental product declaration* (3.11) and *footprint communication* (3.17) *programme operator* (3.10)

3.9
programme element
separate activities for an *environmental product declaration* (3.11) and *footprint communication* (3.17) *programme operator* (3.10) relating to the various duties to be carried out

3.10
programme operator
body or bodies that conduct a Type III environmental declaration programme

Note 1 to entry: A programme operator can be a company or a group of companies, industrial sector or trade association, public authorities or agencies, or an independent scientific body or other organization.

[SOURCE: ISO 14025:2006, 3.4]

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3.11
environmental product declaration
EPD
environmental declaration providing quantified environmental data using predetermined parameters and, where relevant, additional environmental information

Note 1 to entry: The predetermined parameters are based on the ISO 14040 family of standards, which is made up of ISO 14040 and ISO 14044.

Note 2 to entry: The additional environmental information may be quantitative or qualitative.

[SOURCE: ISO 14025:2006, 3.2, modified — "environmental product declaration" replaced "Type III environmental declaration" as the term, "EPD" added, "family of standards" replaced "series of standards" in Note 1 to entry.]

3.12
environmental statement
information on one or more environmental aspect of a product, which intends to inform an intended audience or influence the market of this product

3.13
recognition of a conformity assessment result
acknowledgement of the validity of a conformity assessment result provided by another person or organization

Note 1 to entry: The expression "conformity assessment result" signifies the output of any conformity assessment activity (e.g. a report or certificate) and can include a finding of nonconformity.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17000:2020, 9.5, modified — "recognition" has been removed as the preferred term.]

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3.14
acceptance of a conformity assessment result
use of a conformity assessment result provided by another person or organization

Note 1 to entry: The expression "conformity assessment result" signifies the output of any conformity assessment activity (e.g. a report or certificate) and can include a finding of nonconformity.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 17000:2020, 9.6, modified — "acceptance" has been removed as the preferred term.]

3.15
recognition arrangement
arrangement whereby participating bodies acknowledge to others that the conformity assessment results of the other participating bodies have been produced by competently performed, equivalent procedures

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC Guide 68:2002, 3.1]

3.16
footprint
metric(s) used to report a component of *life cycle assessment* (3.18) results addressing an area of concern

EXAMPLE Carbon footprint of a product (CFP) within the area of concern of climate change.

Note 1 to entry: Requirements for environmental *footprint communication* (3.17) are given in ISO 14026.

[SOURCE: ISO 14050:2020, 3.7.17, modified — "a component of" added to the definition, example and note to entry added.]

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3.17
footprint communication
result of the preparation, provision and dissemination of a *footprint* (3.16), supporting information and explanatory statement

[SOURCE: ISO 14050:2020, 3.7.18]

3.18
life cycle assessment
LCA
compilation and evaluation of the inputs, outputs and the potential environmental impacts of a product system throughout its life cycle

[SOURCE: ISO 14044:2006, 3.2]

4 Mutual recognition arrangement principles

4.1 General

The application of these principles is relevant to ensure that the recognition fulfils the applicable requirements and will guide the application of this document. The principles are the basis for the subsequent requirements specified in this document.

4.2 For the mutual recognition

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4.2.1 Competence

To become a part of the MRA, the programme operator fulfils the requirements of ISO 14020, ISO 14025 and ISO 14026 in addition to this document.

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4.2.2 Openness

The MRA party provides access or discloses information to be reviewed by peer evaluators.

4.2.3 Comparability

The EPDs or footprint communications that follow the same PCR and fall into the same product category supported by the MRA party are comparable with the other party(ies) in the MRA.

4.2.4 Documentation

The approval of the EPD or footprint communications process is documented for the purpose of decision-making regarding the fulfilment of the applicable requirements.

4.3 For the programme operator

4.3.1 Impartiality

The programme operator acts objectively, avoiding any conflict of interest.

4.3.2 Participation

The programme operator ensures that the development of PCR for EPDs or footprints includes all the interested parties and open consultation.

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4.3.3 Confidentiality

The programme operator respects the ownership and confidentiality of proprietary information and data as outlined in the general programme instructions (GPI).

4.4 For the mutual recognition process

4.4.1 Fairness

MRAs are based on objective pieces of evidence and are not influenced by the interests of other MRA party or parties; therefore, findings and conclusions are truthful and accurately reflected.

4.4.2 Proficiency

Peer evaluators fulfil specific required competences and are designated by the MRA party or parties. Competence requirements for peer evaluators are given in 9.2.

4.4.3 Procedural approach

The mutual recognition process follows established documented procedures.

4.4.4 Disclosure

Supporting information for any conformity assessment activity is available only to the MRA parties involved in the recognition of the conformity assessment results under conditions of confidentiality.

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5 Getting started based on a memorandum of understanding (MoU) or other cooperative approaches

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5.1 Agreeing to work together

EPD and footprint communication programme operators may choose to initiate exploratory discussion and assessment of the mutual benefits of an MRA if an MRA does not yet exist or for other reasons. Such informal cooperation should, after a period, if found of interest for both parties, translate into a formal arrangement for cooperation captured in an MoU before a formal MRA is agreed.

5.2 Consideration in relation to a cooperation MoU

When the parties decide to start working together on some of the MRA steps (see 6.3) and but not initially on all of them, an MOU can be extended to a cooperation MoU. A cooperation MoU is likely to include considerations such as:

— confidentiality;

— aim of cooperation;

— scope of cooperation and intended outcome;

— cooperation parties and their relevant details;

— the validity of the MoU and other relevant contractual requirements.

5.3 Transition to an MRA

A cooperation MoU may include a plan to enter into an MRA which conforms to the requirements specified in this document. An MRA can have several purposes depending on the cooperation agreed

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