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| Member States of European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations (CEPT) | |
| Proposed modification of Recommendation ITU-T A.7 | |
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| **Abstract:** | The revision outlines that all proposals for establishing a focus group should be submitted first to TSAG who will decide whether such a focus group should be established and, if so, which group - be it TSAG or other study group(s) - should be the parent group. |

Introduction

It is currently hard to keep track of and participate in the decision-making around setting up new focus groups. This is because any ITU-T study group can create a new focus group. Member States would be better able to participate in these discussions and decisions if all proposals to set up new focus groups were submitted to TSAG.

Proposal

Revision of Recommendation ITU-T A.7.

MOD EUR/38A19/1

Recommendation ITU‑T A.7

Focus groups: Establishment and working procedures

(2000; 2002; 2004; 2006; 2008; 2012, 2016)

Summary

Recommendation ITU-T A.7 describes working methods and procedures of a focus group such as its establishment, terms of reference, leadership, participation, financing, support, deliverables, etc.

ITU-T focus groups are a flexible tool for progressing new work. Such flexibility may allow for groups developing a wide range of deliverables. Since there have been many instances in which the membership of a focus group does not have experience in the development of technical specifications, it has been common that focus group deliverables, although useful, needed to be reworked by the relevant study groups.

The creation of focus group guidelines for their working, including continued coordination with TSAG and, where applicable, their lead study group, could facilitate the swift development of deliverables by the relevant study groups.

Appendix I provides a set of guidelines to guide study groups and focus groups when implementing ITU-T A.7 focus groups that aim at producing specifications that can be efficiently streamlined from focus group deliverables to ITU-T Recommendations or Supplements, or otherwise.

# 1 Scope

The objective of focus groups is to help advance the work of the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU‑T) study groups and to encourage the participation of members of other standards organizations, including experts and individuals who may not be members of ITU. Focus group activities shall include a standardization gap analysis between its deliverables and ITU-T Recommendations, and standards of other international standards development organizations, forums and consortia, and ongoing work.

Procedures and working methods are established to facilitate the financing of focus groups, the completion of work on a well-defined topic and the documentation of the results.

The process of establishment by the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG) is described in order to help identify, in a timely and collaborative manner, all study groups concerned by the scope of a potential focus group, and to agree on a study group or the Telecommunication Standardization Advisory Group (TSAG) as the parent group.

The management of a focus group is placed under the responsibility of a parent group (study group or TSAG), in association with other involved study groups in the case where the work area of the focus group overlaps with the responsibility and the mandate of those study groups (see clause 2.2).

# 2 Establishment, terms of reference and leadership

Within the ITU‑T standardization working structure, the establishment procedures of a focus group should be progressed in a transparent manner.

For each step of the establishment process, the compliance of the focus group proposal with all clauses of this Recommendation should be ensured, and all decisions are to be made by consensus.

## 2.1 Establishment

A focus group is established to help advance the work of ITU‑T study groups.

TSAG shall be the only body within the ITU-T that is able to approve the formation of a focus group and decide which study group will be its parent group.

Proposals to TSAG for the establishment or extension of a focus group may be made by a member or by a study group which has agreed by consensus to make the request to TSAG.

To justify the establishment of a focus group, the following basic criteria shall be fulfilled to their full extent:

• There is a significant interest in the subject and a need to help advance the work of the ITU‑T study groups

• The subject is not already addressed by work underway in ITU‑T study groups or other focus groups

• There should be at least four members (i.e., Member States, or Sector Members from different Member States) who commit to actively support the new focus group.

The establishment of a focus group and its first meeting will be announced according to clause 12 by the Director of TSB in cooperation with the parent group.

### 2.1.1 Proposals by Member States, Sector Members and/or study groups

Proposals to TSAG for the establishment or extension of a focus group may be made by a member or by study groups where the study group has agreed by consensus to make the request to TSAG.

### 2.1.2 Establishment between TSAG meetings

Exceptionally, in response to urgent marketplace needs, a focus group may be established between TSAG meetings for the purpose of studying technical issues (i.e., those that have no regulatory or policy implications).

A proposal to set up a focus group on a specific technical topic, including draft terms of reference, may be submitted by any member to the chairman of TSAG.

The chairman of TSAG coordinates the first review of the proposal with the vice-chairmen and working party chairmen of TSAG and chairmen of all study groups. If the proposal to set up a focus group is supported, the proposal, with completed terms of reference and the nomination of the parent group, will be posted on the ITU‑T website and distributed to the TSAG e-mail distribution list, allowing four weeks for comments. Alternatively, TSAG could meet physically or by convening a virtual meeting.

In the absence of unresolved comments, the chairman of TSAG may decide the immediate establishment of the focus group. As far as possible, the chairman of TSAG should seek to resolve comments by correspondence; however, if this is not possible, the decision to approve establishment of the focus group is deferred to the next meeting of TSAG.

## 2.2 Terms of reference

The topic for a particular focus group is to be well defined (prior to approval), and the terms of reference must include the scope of actions, a plan of action, the expected deliverables and the time schedules for completion.

The relationship of this work to that of the parent group(s) must be indicated, in addition to relationships with other ITU study groups, standards organizations, forums and consortia, etc., and the degree of urgency of the specific topic. The justification that the intended activity cannot be handled as efficiently by study groups should be given.

It is expected that a focus group will complete its work in a short period of time, typically 9‑12 months, following approval of its formation. The scope and breadth of work identified in the terms of reference should take this timeline into account. In appropriate circumstances, and subject to review and approval by TSAG, the term and scope of a focus group may be extended once for a maximum of 12 months.

During the life of the focus group, its terms of reference cannot be modified by the parent group or the focus group itself. Any proposal to modify the terms of reference is to be submitted as a written contribution to TSAG for its consideration and approval.

If more than one study group is involved (i.e., the topic falls under the responsibility and mandate of one or more other study groups), a possible modification of the terms of reference (including scope) should be discussed with the other involved study groups before a decision is taken by TSAG.

## 2.3 Leadership

A chairman and vice-chairman are initially appointed by TSAG. If needed, after the initial establishment of the focus group, subsequent management appointments will be made by the focus group, and the parent group informed accordingly. The parent group will seek TSAG confirmation of management appointments. Appointment of chairman and vice-chairman shall be primarily based upon demonstrated competence both in technical content of the relevant parent group and in the management skills required.

Member States and ITU‑T Sector Members will provide the chairmanship, but vice-chairmanships can be open to ITU‑T Associates and academia.

A focus group chairman who is unable to carry out his or her duties is replaced by one of the vice-chairmen, who is chosen and appointed by TSAG at its next meeting. If none of the vice-chairmen is able to take on the role of chairman, TSAG calls for candidates and the chairman is appointed at the next meeting of TSAG.

# 3 Focus group working procedures

Focus groups shall follow the rules of procedure of the ITU-T.

## 3.1 Participation

Any individual from a country that is a member of ITU and who is willing to contribute actively to the work may participate in a focus group. This includes individuals who are also members of international, regional and national organizations.

Participation in focus groups shall not be used as an alternative to ITU membership.

A list of participants is to be maintained by the focus group for reference purposes and made available to members. This list will include information for persons with disabilities on how their participation shall be facilitated.

Participation in focus groups that have impacts on strategic, structural and/or operational aspects of ITU‑T is limited to ITU‑T members.

# 4 Financing of focus groups and their meetings

Financing of meetings and their preparation is accomplished by volunteer hosting in a similar manner to rapporteur groups, or on the basis of financial arrangements determined by the focus group, provided there is no incremental increase in expenditure and no adverse impact on the normal work of the study groups and TSAG, except for encouraging the participation of persons with disabilities in accordance with *resolves* 3 and 4 of Resolution 175 (Guadalajara, 2010) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, and for supporting the participation of representatives of developing countries[[1]](#footnote-1)1 in accordance with *resolves* 3 of Resolution 123 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010) of the Plenipotentiary Conference.

# 5 Administrative support

Focus groups can establish their own method of providing and financing administrative support between meetings. Provision and financing of administrative support in addition to that provided by the TSB shall be documented and published.

Where administrative services are requested from TSB, there shall be no incremental increase in expenditure and no adverse impact on the normal work of the study groups and TSAG, except for encouraging the participation of persons with disabilities in accordance with *resolves* 3 and 4 of Resolution 175 (Guadalajara, 2010) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, and for supporting the participation of representatives of developing countries in accordance with *resolves* 3 of Resolution 123 (Rev. Guadalajara, 2010) of the Plenipotentiary Conference.

# 6 Meeting logistics

The frequency and location of meetings is decided by each focus group. Electronic document handling methods should be used as much as possible to advance the work rapidly (e.g., by using electronic conferences and the World Wide Web). Participation of persons with disabilities, including the provision of electronic documents in accessible formats, shall be encouraged in accordance with Resolution 175 (Guadalajara, 2010) of the Plenipotentiary Conference.

# 7 Working language

The language to be used will be mutually agreed by the focus group participants. However, any communication with TSAG and the parent group shall preferably be in English or one of the other ITU official languages.

# 8 Technical contributions

Any participant may submit a technical contribution directly to the focus group, in accordance with the time schedule adopted. A template for contributions can be found on the ITU‑T website. Electronic document transfer methods should be used whenever possible.

# 9 Intellectual property rights

The Common Patent Policy for ITU‑T/ITU‑R/ISO/IEC is to be used.

The chairman of a focus group should announce this during every meeting and record all responses in the meeting report.

The copyright provisions in Recommendation ITU‑T A.1 are to be followed.

# 10 Deliverables – approval and distribution

## 10.1 Form of deliverables

Deliverables can be in the form of technical specifications, reports on standards gap analysis results, base material for the development of draft Recommendations, etc., and are only expected to form input to the advanced work of the parent group.

## 10.2 Publication and development of deliverables

The focus group will send all of its deliverables to the parent group for further consideration (see also clause 7). The deliverables shall be published as TDs of the parent group in accordance with clause 3.3.3 of Recommendation ITU‑T A.1, but no later than four calendar weeks before the meeting of the parent group.

For the sake of clarity, all the output/deliverables of a focus group should be posted on the focus group's website, whether or not one or more study groups are involved.

If a deliverable of a focus group is turned into a new work item or to develop a new Question or Questions in a study group, Recommendations ITU-T A.1 or A.13 shall be followed.

## 10.3 Approval of deliverables

Approval shall be obtained by consensus.

## 10.4 Printing and distribution of deliverables

Focus groups may select the method of printing and distribution of deliverables, including the target audience. Deliverables to the parent group, including progress reports, will be processed as TDs by the parent group.

NOTE – A focus group may, at its discretion, share working documents via liaison statements.

All costs must be covered by the focus group. ITU‑T will not be expected to offer any printing and distribution services free of charge, except for progress reports submitted according to clause 11 below, and deliverables to study groups. Any support for printing and distribution services will be documented and published and made available to members.

# 11 Progress reports

Focus group progress reports are to be provided at each parent group meeting at least twelve calendar days before the meeting and transmitted in copy to all involved study groups. They will be posted in the form of TDs.

These progress reports to the parent group should include the following information:

– an updated work plan, including a schedule of planned meetings;

– status of work with reference to the work plan, including a list of outputs and the study groups for which they are intended;

– summary of contributions considered by the focus group;

– list of attendees at all meetings held since the last progress report.

– Details of any financing provided by the TSB and/or other entities, including for example the cost of administrative support, or fellowships, etc.The parent group chairman should also keep TSAG advised of the progress of the focus group.

# 12 Meeting announcements

The establishment of a focus group will be announced in cooperation with the parent group via ITU publications and other means, including communication with other organizations and/or experts, technical journals and the World Wide Web.

The first meeting of a focus group will be arranged by the parent group and the initially appointed chairman.

The schedule of subsequent meetings of a focus group will be decided by the focus group. The process of announcing meetings can be decided by the focus group and parent group and will be published at least six weeks in advance on the ITU website.

# 13 Working guidelines

Focus groups may develop additional, internal working guidelines, as required.

Appendix I   
  
Guidelines for the efficient transfer of focus group   
deliverables by the parent group

(This appendix does not form an integral part of this Recommendation.)

## I.1 Scope

The guidelines in this appendix are intended to facilitate the efficient transfer of deliverables from focus groups (FGs) aimed at being base material for the development of draft ITU‑T Recommendations or Supplements.

Focus groups are a flexible tool for progressing new work. According to the core text of this Recommendation, focus group deliverables can be in the form of technical specifications, reports on standards gap analysis results or base material for the development of draft Recommendations.

Such flexibility may allow focus groups to develop a wide range of deliverables with the involvement of external stakeholders. However, this flexibility can sometimes be a shortcoming, as their deliverables may not be structured or contain material ready to be used as specifications, or their development is not sufficiently coordinated with the appropriate study group(s) to ensure a speedy handling at study groups, after completion of the deliverables by focus groups.

## I.2 Streamlining the transfer of deliverables by focus groups and their approval by study groups

The following streamlining guidance is provided:

NOTE 1 – It should be noted that not all focus groups aim at producing base material for the development of draft Recommendations or Supplements. In many cases, it is acceptable that a focus group will produce other types of deliverables – such as ex ante standardization studies, roadmaps and gap analyses.

1) ITU‑T focus groups should be created with terms of reference and working guidelines that clearly indicate the expected deliverables to be developed, including, but not limited to, formatted base material for the Study Group's development and approval of a draft ITU‑T Recommendation or Supplement.

2) Where appropriate, deliverables of a focus group should be prepared and formatted in a manner that facilitates their development and adoption by the appropriate study group(s) into draft Recommendations or Supplements (e.g., base material formatted in the structure of an ITU‑T Recommendation).

3) Where appropriate and necessary, the parent group should provide coordination for the timely transfer of focus group deliverable(s) to the appropriate study group(s). This is expected to be required especially in instances where the deliverable(s) of a focus group has an unclear destination study group or multiple destination study groups.

4) Experts leading the work within a focus group should have experience in developing ITU‑T Recommendations or Supplements. Additionally, training should be provided to the focus group management and participants on the ITU‑T working methods.

5) Focus group deliverables aimed as future ITU‑T Recommendations or Supplements should follow the *Author's Guide for drafting ITU‑T Recommendations* and their content must have content that is expected for ITU‑T Recommendations or Supplements.

NOTE 2 – The *Author's Guide for drafting ITU‑T Recommendations* can be found in the ITU website at <http://itu.int/go/trecauthguide>.

6) Drafts of focus group deliverables aimed as future ITU‑T Recommendations or Supplements should be shared with the appropriate study group(s) on a regular basis. When focus group deliverables aimed as future ITU‑T Recommendations or Supplements would fall under the responsibility of different study groups, the focus group should share their deliverables with the relevant groups as soon as possible.

7) Once mature, focus group deliverables aimed as future ITU‑T Recommendations or Supplements are approved by the focus group for transmission to the parent group for review and possible agreement. The parent group will provide the final report of the focus group to TSAG.

1. 1 These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries and countries with economies in transition. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)