

Consensus

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Discussion

Consensus provides a basis for collective decisions in standards development and governance processes. Consensus does not require every participant to agree with every aspect of a decision. It requires a general agreement reached through a process that considers material comments and objections fairly.

Within a standards development process, consensus depends on more than a numerical majority. The process provides participants with meaningful opportunities to review proposals, express views, raise objections, and respond to others' views and objections.

A consensus decision may retain unresolved objections when the responsible body has considered those objections through its established procedures. The existence of an objection does not, by itself, demonstrate the absence of consensus.

Definition

General agreement reached through fair consideration of relevant views and objections without requiring unanimity.

Source

* Office of Management and Budget, Circular A-119: Federal Participation in the Development and Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards and in Conformity Assessment Activities * International Organization for Standardization and International Electrotechnical Commission, ISO/IEC Guide 2, Standardization and related activities — General vocabulary

Note

Consensus differs from unanimity. Unanimity requires agreement by every participant or eligible decision-maker. Consensus permits continuing disagreement when the process has considered the relevant views and objections fairly, impartially, openly, and transparently.

Consensus also differs from a simple majority vote. A vote may provide evidence relevant to consensus, but the vote alone does not demonstrate that the process considered material objections or balanced the interests represented.

Example

A standards body may determine that consensus exists after resolving most objections, documenting the disposition of remaining objections, and providing access to an impartial appeals process.

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