

Selection process for the open standards lists

October 2009

0. Introduction

This document provides information on the selection process for inclusion of an open standard in the 'Comply or Explain' list of open standards and the list of frequently used standards.

The process consists of a number of steps (submission, intake, administrative check, expert investigation, public consultation, Forum). These steps will be discussed individually below Figure 1.

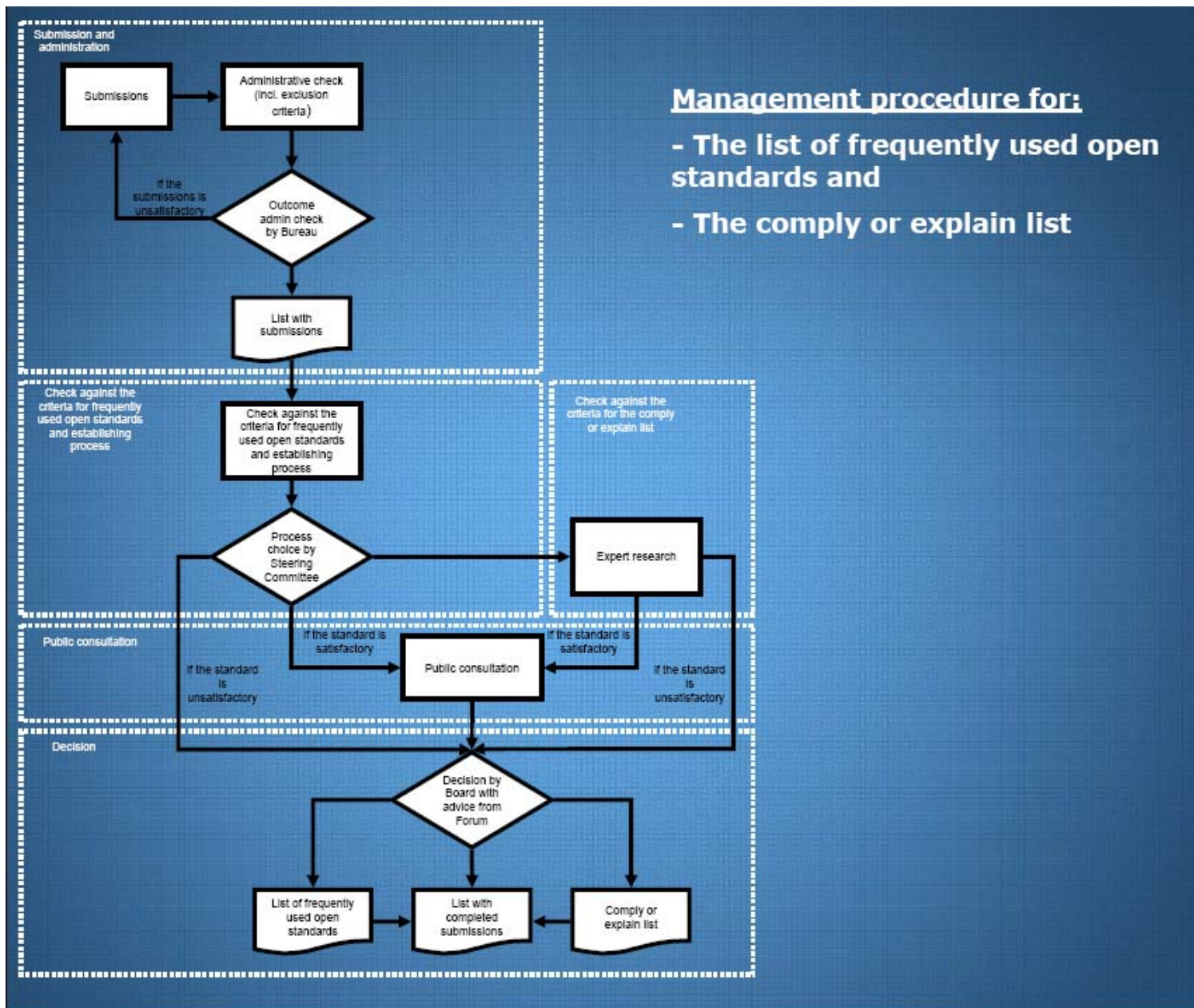


Figure 1: Visual representation of the management process

1. Submission

The process starts with submission of a standard by an organisation or a citizen to the Standardisation Forum Office by means of the submission form. Some of the questions in the submission form pertain to the criteria for inclusion in the open standards list. Anyone can submit any standard used in the public sector, provided that inclusion in the list contributes to the objectives of the list. These objectives are increasing interoperability and reducing supplier dependency. Since the 'Comply or Explain' regime applies to government organisations, it is advisable that a government organisation acts as sponsor of the standard submitted. A standard may be submitted in four ways:

1. Report of a new (or rival) open standard
2. Report of a new version of an open standard
3. Report that an open standard no longer meets the requirements
4. Report that an open standard should be moved to another list

In principle, the order in which reports are handled is determined by the submission date, i.e. the earlier it is reported the sooner it will be handled. However, due to budget and capacity limitations, a maximum of twelve processes can be handled per year. Standards submitted at a later date can only be brought forward if important interests of the public sector are involved. This must be well substantiated.

2. Administrative check

Upon receipt of the submission form, the Standardisation Forum Office will first perform an administrative check. This check consists of the following:

1. Establishing whether the form has been fully completed
2. Establishing whether the standard meets the exclusion criteria
3. Check whether or not the standard has already been included in the list of submitted standards, the list of standards to be evaluated, the list of frequently used open standards or the 'Comply or Explain' list.

If the standard passes these checks, confirmation of receipt is sent, specifying the term within which the submitting party will be contacted to arrange an intake meeting. This will be done within five working days. Meanwhile, the standard will be included in the list of reported standards. We aim to arrange an intake meeting within one month of reporting. This handling time is subject to the number of reports received by the Standardisation Forum Office and availability of the submitting party.

In the event of rejection, a confirmation of receipt is sent which includes the following:

- A request to the submitting party to fully complete the form (if the form was not fully completed).
- Or a notice that the standard does not meet the exclusion criteria.
- Or a notice that the standard is already included in one of the lists and will not be included in the procedure for that reason.

3. Intake

The intake consists of a meeting between the Standardisation Forum Office and the submitting party. The answers on the registration form will be discussed and further information will be requested if necessary. The level of the evaluation depends on the type of report. There are four types of report:

1. Report of a new open standard
2. Report of a new version of an open standard
3. Request to move an open standard to another list

4. Request to remove an open standard from a list

In general, evaluation will be more stringent for the 'Comply or Explain' list than for the list of common standards. For a new version of an existing standard, evaluation will be less stringent than for an entirely new standard. The two most important variants are described below.

4.A Expert evaluation for the list of common open standards

Standards for the list of common open standards will be checked against the criteria by an expert in the field of standards. To be included in the list, the standards should meet the following criteria:

- Openness: Standards to be included in the list of recommended open standards must meet a number of requirements with respect to openness.
- De facto: the standard must be widely accepted. Consensus must exist regarding the standard and the standard must be widely used.

4.B Expert evaluation for the 'Comply or Explain' list

Standards for the 'Comply or Explain' list will be checked against the criteria by an expert group. To be included in the list, the standards should meet the following criteria:

- Openness: Standards to be included in the list of recommended open standards must meet a number of requirements with respect to openness.
- Workability: The extent to which a standard can actually be applied. The aspects evaluated are maturity, functionality and rival standards.
- Potential: The extent to which inclusion of the standard in the list contributes to the objectives of the list (supplier independence and increase of interoperability).
- Impact: The consequences of inclusion of the standard in the list for parties in the proposed organisational scope and for other parties affected.

For each standard to be included in the 'Comply or Explain' list, the Standardisation Forum Office will assign an expert group. Depending on the weight of the report (new standard, new version, move or removal) one or more experts will be involved. The experts will be selected based on consultation of the submitting party and other parties involved. The expert group consists of users of the standard, suppliers of the standard, and in many cases also the standard administrator. If rival standards exist, stakeholders of the rival standard will also be invited.

The expert group will be chaired by an independent chairperson.

For each standard, the expert group will draw up a recommendation, written by the chairperson, discussing the extent to which the standard meets the criteria.

5. Public consultation:

Each standard approved by the expert group for inclusion in the list will be made available for public consultation in an online consultation document, which also includes the questions. The consultation document elucidates the arguments and considerations of the expert group for recommending a standard.

The consultation document will be put on the Standardisation Forum website for a period of four weeks. Anyone can respond to the recommendations. Direct stakeholders will be actively approached for a substantiated response. Stakeholders can submit their point of view to the Standardisation Forum Office in writing or electronically.

Upon completion of public consultation, the Standardisation Forum Office will publish all responses on the Standardisation Forum website, unless reasons are provided for a confidential response.

The Standardisation Forum Office will present the responses to the chairperson and, if necessary, the expert group, and send the respondents a personal reply.

6. Establishment:

Based on the expert recommendation and responses from public consultation it deems relevant, the Standardisation Forum Office will draw up a recommendation to the Standardisation Board. In principle, the Forum will only reach decisions on its recommendation to the Board during Forum meetings, which are held six times per year. Only in exceptional cases may a decision on a recommendation also be made in writing.

Based on the Forum recommendation, the Standardisation Board decides whether the standard will be included in the list of frequently used open standards, the 'Comply or Explain' list, or the list of submissions processed. In general, the Board will only reach these decisions during meetings held twice a year, in May and October. Only in exceptional cases will the Board define its point of view in writing.

Complaints

Some parties may feel they have not received fair treatment. Such parties may direct a complaint to the Office. The Office will present the complaint directly to the Standardisation Forum. The Office will inform the Board of every complaint received and keep them informed of further handling of the complaint.

1. Complaints may be submitted in writing or orally. A formal procedure only exists for written complaints.
2. You will receive a written confirmation of receipt for the complaint. The complaint will be handled by a neutral party.
3. The complainant and the accused will both be given the opportunity to comment on the matter, unless the complainant indicates that he/she does not wish to do so.
4. In general, complaints must be handled within six weeks. If you are not satisfied with the internal handling of your complaint, or the outcome, you can submit a complaint to the National Ombudsman.

Please direct your complaint to:

GBO.Overheid

Attn Bureau Forum Standaardisatie

P.O. Box 84011

2508 AA The Hague

Please indicate clearly in the header of the letter that it concerns a complaint.