

PATH's Codes and Standards Path

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Discussions that ultimately led to PATH's formation began in part over concerns that the [European Integrated Hydrogen Project](#) would develop an agenda for ISO standards that the U.S., Canada, and Japan would not be a position to effectively respond to. I am not going to rehash whether or not the Germans made the best decision with respect to choice of venues or whether their argument for not taking their tank requirements to ISO was valid. I would rather focus on what those and future decisions might mean for PATH.

First let's review what has happened since the decision was made by the German Ministry of Transport in March of 2001 to ask the ECE to present their draft regulations to WP.29 of the UN. After referring the matter down the line to an ad hoc committee report to one of WP.29's standing committees, this ad hoc committee began the laborious process of harmonizing the existing ISO drafts standards and EIHP proposed draft regulations. After more than 10 drafts, the language appears to be close to harmonization. It appears that, at the end of the day, the ISO standard will have identical language to the document that, if it is approved, will stand as a European-wide standard.

What has been accomplished by this process? An international standard and a European regulation have moved to a similar position based on negotiated process housed under the WP.29, 1958 agreement. The 1958 Agreement is essentially a European-wide agreement with a few other countries outside of Europe, as parties to it. As the EIHP produces additional draft regulations on hydrogen vehicles and infrastructure, will we see ISO continuing on word for word basis trying to accommodate to ECE standards? At a time when ISO is trying to free itself from a Eurocentric image, it finds itself on this issue bending its will to WP.29 under a regional European agreement.

How should PATH view and address this issue? Let's start with a few premises. PATH is not going to write or make detailed comments on standards, codes or regulations. PATH does not plan to set itself up as a non-European EIHP. PATH recognizes that even with three members its market size is greater than the EU's for energy, vehicles and tanks. It also realizes that over time that difference will grow. There is also a desire by all PATH member countries to constructively engage the EU on a variety of issues including codes and standards.

PATH must decide how it wishes to engage in the codes and standards dialogue. Each member must determine its most important issues. These must be discussed and consensus items identified. Then members must decide on a framework with which to address these issues which would be followed by developing and implementing a plan for action. The end point is open ended and there is time to engage in the process a step at a time. PATH may decide that it is enough to make each other aware of important codes and standards issues and discuss them. At the other end of spectrum, PATH members may decide that they want to weigh in on an ongoing basis on codes and standards policy issues and steer the international community to a new or refurbished venue for standards discussions.