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IETF Stream Documents Require IETF Rough Consensus
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Abstract

This document proposes that the IETF never publish any IEtF stream RFCs without IETF rough consensus. This updates RFC 2026.

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1. Introduction

IETF procedures, as defined by [RFC2026] allow for Informational or Experimental RFCs to be published without IETF rough consensus. For context, it should be remembered that this RFC predates the separation of the various streams (e.g. IRTF, IAB, and Independent.) When it was written, there were only "RFC"s.

As a consequence, it is currently permitted for the IETF to approve an Internet Draft for publication as an RFC without IETF rough consensus.

2. Terminology

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in BCP 14 [RFC2119] [RFC8174] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here.

3. Proposal

The IETF MUST NOT publish RFCs on the IETF stream without IETF rough consensus.

4. Discussion

The current procedures permit such publication. The IESG has issued a statement saying that no document will be issued without first conducting an IETF Last Call. While this apparently improves the situation, looking closely it makes it worse. Rather than publishing documents without verifying that there is rough consensus, as the wording in [RFC2026] suggests, this has the IESG explicitly publishing documents on the IETF stream that have failed to achieve rough consensus.

One could argue that there is a need for publishing some documents that the community can not agree on. However, we have an explicit procedure for such publication, namely the Independent Stream. Or, for research documents, the IRTF stream, which explicitly publishes many minority opinion Informational RFCs.

If this proposal is not accepted, there is still a minor problem to be addressed. When a non-consensus document is published, the current boilerplate simply omits the sentence claiming that there is consensus. If the community feels that we need to keep the right for the IESG to publish Informational or Experimental RFCs without IETF rough consensus, then please, the IAB SHOULD use its authorithy over the boilerplate for RFCs to make the boilerplate explicit rather than relying on readers to detect a missing sentence.

5. IANA Considerations

No values are assigned in this document, no registries are created, and there is no action assigned to the IANA by this document.

6. Security Considerations

This document introduces no new security considerations. It is a process document about changes to the rules for certain corner cases in publishing IETF stream RFCs.

7. Normative References

[RFC2026] Bradner, S., "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", BCP 9, RFC 2026, DOI 10.17487/RFC2026, October 1996, <https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc2026>.

[RFC2119] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels", BCP 14, RFC 2119, DOI 10.17487/RFC2119, March 1997, <https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc2119>.

[RFC8174] Leiba, B., "Ambiguity of Uppercase vs Lowercase in RFC 2119 Key Words", BCP 14, RFC 8174, DOI 10.17487/RFC8174, May 2017, <https://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc8174>.

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