

The 3G IP Multimedia Subsystem (IMS)

Merging the Internet and the
Cellular Worlds

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0470 87156 3

Typeset by the author using L^AT_EX Software.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Antony Rowe Ltd, Chipenham, Wiltshire.

This book is printed on acid-free paper responsibly manufactured from sustainable forestry in which at least two trees are planted for each one used for paper production.

Chapter 2

The History of the IMS Standardization

In Chapter 1 we mentioned that the IMS uses Internet protocols. When the IMS needs a protocol to perform a particular task (e.g., to establish a multimedia session), the standardization bodies standardizing the IMS take the Internet protocol intended for that task and specify its use in the IMS. Still, no matter how simple this may sound the process of choosing protocols to be used in the IMS can sometimes get tricky. Sometimes, the Internet protocol that is chosen lacks some essential functionality, or does not even exist at all. When this happens the IMS standardization bodies contact the standardization body developing Internet protocols to work together on a solution. We will cover this collaboration in Section 2.5. Nevertheless, before jumping into that we will introduce in Section 2.1 all the standardization bodies involved in IMS development. We need to know who is who and which functions of the IMS each of them performs.

2.1 Relations between IMS-related Standardization Bodies

The ITU (International Telecommunication Union) IMT-2000 (International Mobile Telecommunications-2000) is the global standard for 3G (third generation) networks. IMT-2000 is the result of the collaboration between different standards bodies and aims at providing access to telecommunication services using radio links, which include satellite and terrestrial networks.

We will focus on two of the standard bodies involved in IMT-2000: 3GPP (Third Generation Partnership Project) and 3GPP2 (Third Generation Partnership Project 2). Still, they are not the only ones working within IMT-2000. Other bodies, such as the ITU-R (ITU-Radiocommunication Sector), for instance, are also involved in IMT-2000 but on different areas than the IMS.

Both 3GPP and 3GPP2 have standardized their own IMS (IP Multimedia Subsystem). The 3GPP IMS and the 3GPP2 IMS are fairly similar, but, nevertheless, have a few differences (Appendix A lists the most important differences).

An important similarity between the 3GPP IMS and the 3GPP2 IMS is that both use Internet protocols, which have been traditionally standardized by the IETF (Internet Engineering Task Force). Consequently, both 3GPP and 3GPP2 collaborate with the IETF in developing protocols that fulfill their requirements. The following sections introduce the IETF, 3GPP, and 3GPP2 and provide a brief history of the IETF-3GPP/3GPP2 collaboration.

In addition to the standard bodies we have just mentioned, OMA (Open Mobile Alliance [144]) will play an important role in developing IMS services in the near future. While 3GPP and 3GPP2 have standardized (or are standardizing) a few IMS services, such as basic video calls or conferencing, from now on OMA will focus on service standardization for the IMS (of course, other standard bodies and third parties besides OMA may also develop services for the IMS).

2.2 Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF)

The Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) is a loosely self-organized collection of network designers, operators, vendors, and research institutions that work together to develop the architecture, protocols, and operation of the public Internet. The IETF is a body that is open to any interested individual. The IETF is not a corporation and, therefore, does not have a board of directors, members, nor dues.

The IETF is the standardization body that has developed most of the protocols that are currently used on the Internet. The IETF does not standardize networks, architectures combining different protocols, the internal behaviour of nodes, nor APIs (Application Programming Interface). The IETF is the protocol factory for IP-related protocols.

2.2.1 Structure of IETF

Work in the IETF is organized in working groups. Each working group is chartered to perform specific tasks, such as the delivery of a precise set of documents. Each working group has from one to three chairs, who take care that the working group completes its chartered tasks in time. Working groups have a temporary lifetime; so, once they have delivered their documents, either they are rechartered or they cease to exist. Figure 2.1 shows a few, but not all, of the working groups in the IETF; there are more than 100 active working groups in the IETF. The complete up-to-date list of active working groups is available at:

<http://www.ietf.org/html.charters/wg-dir.html>

Working groups get an acronym name that identifies the chartered task. For instance, SIPPING is the acronym of “Session Initiation Protocol Investigation”, SIMPLE is the acronym of “SIP for Instant Messaging and Presence Leveraging Extensions” or AAA for “Authentication, Authorization and Accounting”.

A collection of working groups form an Area Directorate. There are currently eight areas, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Each area has one or two area directors who, together with the IETF chairman, form the IESG (Internet Engineering Steering Group). The IESG is the technical

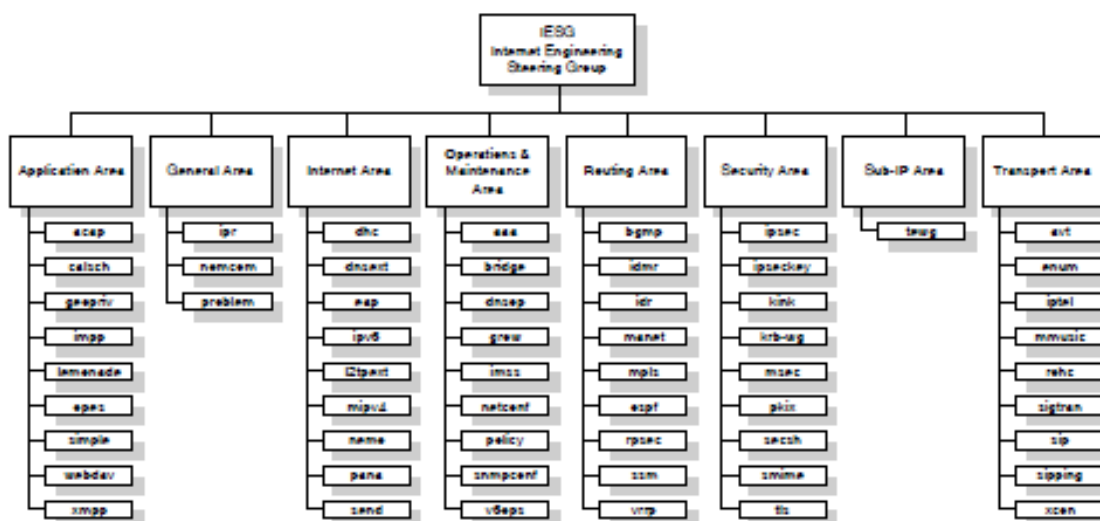


Figure 2.1: The structure of the IETF

management team of the IETF. They decide on which areas the IETF should work and review all the specifications that are produced.

The following web pages contain the complete list of the working groups of all areas and the charter of the SIPING working group respectively.

<http://www.ietf.org/html.charters/wg-dir.html>

<http://www.ietf.org/html.charters/sipping-charter.html>

The IAB (Internet Architecture Board) is the body that provides technical leadership and handles appeals. Its web page is:

<http://www.iab.org/>

2.2.2 Working Group Operations

The technical work in the IETF is done within the working groups. Working groups do not have any kind of membership; they are formed by a number of volunteers that work as individuals. That is, they do not represent their companies when working for the IETF.

Most of the technical discussions within a working group take place in its mailing list. Even the decisions made at face-to-face meetings (held three times a year) have to be confirmed in the mailing list.

The technical documents used within the working groups are called Internet-Drafts. There are two types of them: individual submissions and working group items. Individual submissions are technical proposals submitted by an individual or individuals. If the working group decides that an individual submission is a good starting point to work on a particular topic, it becomes a working group item.

Individual submissions and working group items can be distinguished by the name of the file where they are stored. Individual submissions start with:

`draft-author's_name`

while working group items start with:

`draft-ietf-name_of_the_working_group`

A list of all the Internet-Drafts can be found at:

<http://www.ietf.org/internet-drafts/>

When a working group feels that a working group item is ready for publication as an RFC the working group chairs send it to the IESG. The IESG may provide feedback to the working group (e.g., ask that working group to change something in the draft) and, eventually, decides whether or not a new RFC is published.

Although most of the Internet-Drafts that the IESG receives come from working groups an individual may also submit an Internet-Draft to the IESG. This usually happens with topics that are not large enough to grant the creation of a working group, but which, nevertheless, are of interest to the Internet community.

It is important to note that Internet-Drafts, even if they are working group items, represent work in progress and should only be referenced as such. Internet-Drafts are temporary documents that expire and cease to exist six months after they are issued. They can change at any time without taking into consideration backward compatibility issues with existing implementations. Only when a particular Internet-Draft becomes an RFC can it be considered a stable specification.

2.2.3 Types of RFCs

The technical documents produced by the IETF are called RFCs (Request For Comments). According to the contents of the document there are three main types of RFCs:

- Standards-track RFCs.
- Non-standards-track RFCs.
- BCP (Best Current Practise) RFCs.

Standards-track RFCs typically define protocols and extensions to protocols. According to the maturity of the protocol there are three levels of standards-track RFCs: proposed standard, draft standard, and Internet standard. Standards-track specifications are supposed to advance from proposed to draft and, finally, to Internet standard as they get more and more mature. An important requirement in this process is that a particular specification is implemented by several people to show that different independently built implementations that follow the same specification can successfully interoperate.

Nevertheless, in practise only a few RFCs reach the draft standard level and even fewer become Internet standards. At present, the specifications of many protocols that are used massively on the Internet are proposed standards.

There are three types of non-standards-track RFCs: experimental, informational, and historical (which are called *historic* RFCs). Experimental RFCs specify protocols with a very limited use, while informational RFCs provide information for the Internet community about some topic, such as a requirements document or a process. When a standards-track RFC becomes obsolete, it becomes a historic RFC.

BCP RFCs record the best current practise known to the community to perform a particular task. They may deal with protocol issues or with administrative issues.

Figure 2.2 shows the relations between all the RFC types. A list of all the RFCs published so far and their status can be fetched from:

http://www.ietf.org/iesg/1rfc_index.txt

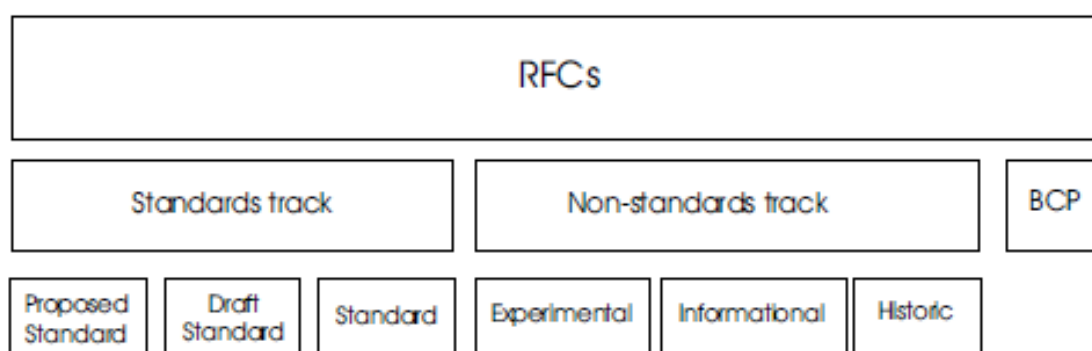


Figure 2.2: RFC types

RFCs can be downloaded from the following web page by just introducing the RFC number:

<http://www.ietf.org/rfc.html>

Additionally, the RFC Editor offers a web page that allows us to search for RFCs by title, number, author and keywords:

<http://www.rfc-editor.org/rfcsearch.html>

2.3 Third Generation Partnership Project (3GPP)

The Third Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) was born in 1998 as a collaboration agreement between a number of regional telecommunication standard bodies, known as *organizational partners*. The current 3GPP organizational partners are:

1. ARIB (Association of Radio Industries and Business) in Japan,

<http://www.arib.or.jp/english/>

2. CCSA (China Communications Standards Associations) in China,

<http://www.ccsa.org.cn/english/>

3. ETSI (European Telecommunications Standards Institute) in Europe,

<http://www.etsi.org/>

4. Committee T1 in the United States of America,

<http://www.t1.org/>

5. TTA (Telecommunications Technology Association) of Korea

<http://www.tta.or.kr/English/>

6. TTC (Telecommunication Technology Committee) in Japan,

<http://www.ttc.or.jp/e/>

3GPP was originally chartered to develop globally applicable Technical Specifications and Technical Reports for a third-generation mobile system based on GSM. The scope has been reinforced to include maintenance and development of GSM specifications including the supported and evolved radio networks, technologies, and packet access technologies.

Besides the organizational partners, *market representation partners* provide the partnership with market requirements. Market representation partners include, among others, the UMTS Forum, 3G Americas, the GSM Association, the Global mobile Suppliers Association, the TD-SCDMA Forum, and the IPv6 Forum.

3GPP maintains an up-to-date web site at:

<http://www.3gpp.org/>

2.3.1 3GPP Structure

3GPP is organized in a Project Co-ordination Group (PCG) and Technical Specification Groups (TSGs), as illustrated in Figure 2.3. The PCG is responsible for the overall management of 3GPP, time plans, allocation of work, etc. The technical work is produced in the TSGs. At the moment there are five TSGs, responsible for the Core Network (CN), System and Services Aspects (SA), GSM EDGE Radio Access Network (GERAN), Radio Access Network (RAN), and Terminals (T). Each of the TSGs is further divided into Working Groups. Each of the Working Groups is allocated particular tasks. For instance, CN WG1 is responsible for all the detailed design of the usage of SIP and SDP in the IMS, CN WG3 for interworking aspects and CN4 for all the detailed design of the usage of Diameter. SA WG1 is responsible for the requirements, SA2 for the architecture, SA WG3 for the security aspects, SA WG4 for the codecs, and SA WG5 for the operation and maintenance of the network.

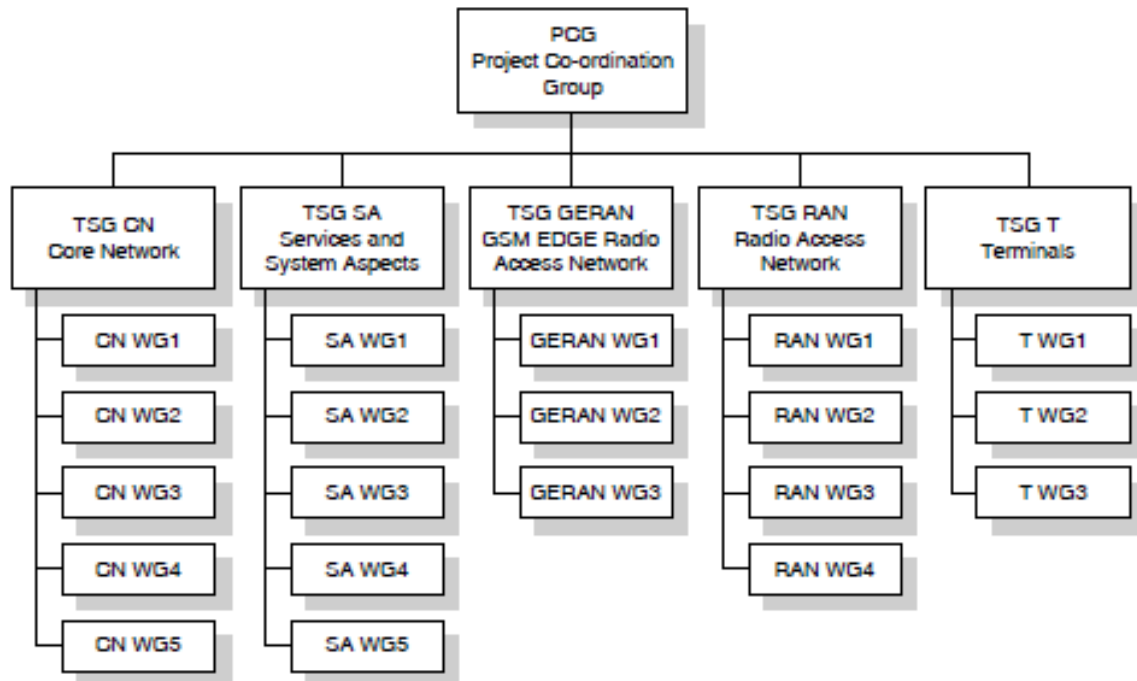


Figure 2.3: The structure of 3GPP

2.3.2 3GPP Deliverables

3GPP working groups do not produce standards. Instead, they produce Technical Specifications (TS) and Technical Reports (TR) that are approved by the TSGs. Once approved they are submitted to the organizational partners to be submitted to their respective standardization processes. The final part of the process is in the organizational partners' hands when they approve the TSs or TRs as part of their standards procedures. As a result, there is a set of globally developed standards that are ready to be used in a particular region.

3GPP TSs and TRs are numbered according to the sequence of four or five digits that follow the pattern "xx.yyy". The first two digits "xx" identify the series number, and the last two or three digits "yy" or "yyy" identify a particular specification within a series. For instance, 3GPP TS 23.228 [21] describes the architectural aspects of the IMS.

3GPP groups its specifications in what is called a *Release*. 3GPP Release 5 contains the first version of the IMS. 3GPP Release 6 contains enhancements to the IMS. The reader must note that the IMS is just a fraction of the 3GPP deliverables in a particular Release, as there are other non-IMS specifications included in a 3GPP Release. 3GPP TSs and TRs include a version number that follows the pattern "x.y.z", where "x" represents the 3GPP Release where the specification is published, "y" is the version number, and "z" is a sub-version number. So, 3GPP TS 23.228 version 5.8.0 means version 8.0 of the Release 5 version of TS 23.228.

3GPP TSs and TRs are publicly available at the 3GPP web site at either of the following URIs:

<http://www.3gpp.org/specs/specs.htm>

<http://www.3gpp.org/ftp/Specs/archive/>

2.4 Third Generation Partnership Project 2 (3GPP2)

If 3GPP was born to evolve GSM specifications into a third-generation cellular system, the Third Generation Partnership Project 2 (3GPP2) was born to evolve North American and Asian cellular networks based on ANSI/TIA/EIA-41 standards and CDMA2000© radio access into a third-generation system. 3GPP2 like 3GPP is a partnership project whose members are also known as *organizational partners*. The current list of organizational partners include ARIB (Japan), CCSA (China), TIA (Telecommunications Industry Association) (North America), TTA (Korea), and TTC (Japan). Probably, the reader has noticed that most of them are also organizational partners of 3GPP.

Like 3GPP, 3GPP2 gets market requirements and advice from *market representation partners*. At the moment the list includes the IPv6 Forum and the CDMA Development Group.

2.4.1 3GPP2 Structure

The 3GPP2 structure mimics the structure of 3GPP, as illustrated in Figure 2.4. A Steering Committee (SC) is responsible for the overall standardization process and the planning. The technical work is done in Technical Specification Groups (TSGs). TSG-A is focused on the Access Network Interface, TSG-C on CDMA2000© technology, TSG-S on Service and System Aspects, and TSG-X in Intersystems Operations. TSG-X was born as a merger between the former TSG-N (Core Networks) and TSG-P (Packet Data) TSGs. The structure of TSN-X is not completely defined yet.

2.4.2 3GPP2 Deliverables

Like 3GPP, 3GPP2 does not produce standards but, instead, Technical Specifications (TSs) and Technical reports (TRs). The documents are created by the TSGs and approved by the SC. Then, they are submitted to the organizational partners to be submitted to their respective standardization processes.

3GPP2 TSs and TRs are numbered with a sequence of letters and digits that follows the scheme “A.Bxxxx-yyy-R” where “A” is a letter that represents the name of the TSG that delivers the document, “B” can be an “R” letter to indicate a TR or a requirements document, but it can also be an “S” letter to indicate a TS. “xxxx” is a sequential number allocated to the document. An optional “yyy” sequence of digits can further identify the chapter within a specification series. The “R” letter identifies the revision. The version number follows the specification and indicates a major and