

Update on the standardisation dossier – ETUC STAND project

Background

Standardisation refers to the process by which “industry standards” are developed, and it can have a real impact on working conditions. Since 2013¹, the ETUC has officially been engaged in the issue of European standardisation and has drawn the attention of affiliates to the potential challenges it poses to workers and trade unions. We have consistently called on the European Commission to take steps which allow the ETUC to play a full role in the process of standardisation. This approach has been designed from the outset to specifically complement the targeted work on standardisation that has been carried out by the ETUI for two decades in various specific fields.

In 2014, the ETUC resolved to “take appropriate measures ... to facilitate the effective involvement of the different union confederations and European trade unions.”²

In 2015, the ETUC agreed a rationale for trade union involvement in standardisation which called for the support of national and European trade union federations to represent workers’ interests in standardisation at national and European level in order to:

- a) prevent standards from encroaching upon national labour laws, established collective agreements and collective bargaining, and impede any attempt to use standards for a parallel recodification of labour laws;
- b) promote a high level of health and safety at work and quality working conditions above the level of existing public regulations;
- c) foster the development of high quality standards for products and services sustaining the competitiveness and advanced know-how of European work forces and the creation of new quality jobs.

The project

Since early 2015, the ETUC has been funded by DG GROW to deliver the project ‘ETUC STAND’, which is intended to build the capacities of trade unions in the field of standardisation. The ETUC STAND project aims to improve the situation over a six year-period (4+2) by means of a series of actions, including:

- a) The effective participation in the standardisation work at a policy level (by interfacing with governing bodies of European standardisation organisation, with the European Commission, and other European societal stakeholders).
- b) The effective participation in the standardisation work at a technical level by means of direct involvement of experts within technical committees and working groups on selected standards.

¹ See ‘ETUC Resolution on European Standardisation’: <https://www.etuc.org/documents/etuc-resolution-european-standardisation#.WnsfKaitw2x>

² See second ‘ETUC Resolution on European Standardisation’: <https://www.etuc.org/documents/etuc-resolution-european-standardisation-0#.WnsR5Kjt2w>

- c) The training of trade union experts participating in technical committees and networking with workers representatives involved in standardisation activities in order to share experience and improve trade unions capacity to act in standardisation.
- d) The communication and sharing of information related to standardisation with trade unions and workers' representatives, including adoption of resolutions and organization of an annual meeting gathering trade unions representatives interested in standardisation issue.

Achievements of ETUC STAND thus far

Since January 2018, the ETUC Secretariat now has 2.3 FTE staff dedicated to this work, wholly financed by the ETUC STAND project, who have thus far:

- a) Established infrastructure in the ETUC to deal with standardisation, including:
 - Regular permanent committee “Standardisation” meetings and consultations.
 - Increasing network of ETUC experts who can actively participate in the standard writing processes in a number of policy areas of strategic importance for the ETUC.
 - Network of national trade union contact points on standardisation.
- b) Provided support to national affiliates on specific national standardisation policy areas.
- c) Participated, on behalf of the ETUC, in selected management meetings of the European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs), like their General Assemblies, as well as participation in European Commission working groups related to standardisation.
- d) Set up within the ETUC secretariat a competence centre on standardisation issues, providing training and support.
- e) Established a newsletter to share information on standardisation issues which can affect workers directly (and indirectly) and other publicly available material on the ETUC website.
- f) Increased awareness via outreach activities with national trade unions and the ETUFs on the importance of standards, with a focus on “new” economic sectors.
- g) Established a series on national seminars on the impact of standardisation on industrial relations.
- h) Implemented awareness raising amongst affiliates that European Standards can:
 - be a policy tool for the European institutions as their voluntary—yet prestigious—status are tantamount to a “soft regulation” tool.
 - complement legislation – or in some cases can be an alternative for European legislative initiatives.
- i) Secured stable project funding by the European Commission and EFTA, through a Framework Partnership Agreement (4+2years).
- j) Held regular coordination meetings with other societal stakeholders and partners (ANEC, ECOS, SBS, ETUI, ITUC, etc.) dealing with standardisation issues to increase effective participation at and inclusion of social stakeholders in the standardisation-setting.

Work programme 2018

The priorities to be delivered throughout 2018 are tied to the specific actions associated with the four work packages detailed in the 2018 Work Programme. These include:

Work package 1: Co-operation with ESOs governing bodies, European Commission and Annex 3 Organisations

- a) Provide official ETUC comments, positions and reactions to exchange with ESO governing bodies, EC, and the other recognised societal stakeholders and SME representatives (known as 'Annex III organisations').
- b) Participate and provide input to the meeting(s) of the Joint initiative on Standardisation steering group and Action-related working groups³.
- c) Continue to liaise with other Annex III organisations.
- d) Provide feedback to interested parties on the work carried out at the interface with ESOs governing bodies (including CEN Societal Stakeholder Group⁴, the Strategic Advisory Group on Services⁵, etc), EC (including the Committee on Standards (CoS), the Multi Stakeholder Platform (MSP⁶) on ICT standardisation and the CoS Working Group on standards and patents) and Annex III organisations.
- e) Five Internal updates to ETUC members (including permanent committee consultation) on the work carried out at the interface with ESOs governing bodies (including CEN SSG, etc.), EC (including the Committee on Standards, MSP on ICT standardisation, the CoS working group on standards and patents) and Annex III organisations.
- f) Deliver one annual and one interim activity report to the Commission as well as one report according to Article 24 and Article 16 of the Regulation.
- g) Develop the ETUC Work Programme for 2019.
- h) Provide two contributions to events, such as CEN/Technical Board or CoS.

Work package 2: Networking, capacity building and training of experts

- a) Develop and populate the list of national and sectoral affiliates' experts for participation in standardisation activities.
- b) Explore and explain standardisation as a potential tool for action in existing ETUC working groups and other relevant trade unions policy groups.
- c) Horizontal and specialised training for all interested experts and associated material.
- d) ETUC I Permanent Committee on "Standardisation" plenary meetings in Brussels to share experience and create a community of trade union members, external partners and different stakeholders representing social interests in standardisation.
- e) Contribute to external events and conferences by presenting/speaking about ETUC's work on standards.
- f) National workshop/seminars in Netherlands, Lithuania and Latvia
- g) Technical English training course (about 2 experts).
- h) Seek new nominations for representatives to the ETUC Permanent Committee on standardisation.
- i) Deliver an eLearning module, elaborated under the leadership of CEN, with contributions of ANEC and ECOS.

Work package 3: Participating in the work of the technical committees of ESOs

- a) Attend meetings of ESOs' Technical Committees and provide internal expert reports to ETUC Secretariat on the work in technical committees and working groups.
- b) Provide ad hoc comments on draft standards as they are released.

Work package 4: Information, communication, promotion of European standards

³ http://ec.europa.eu/growth/content/joint-initiative-standardisation-responding-changing-marketplace-0_en

⁴ <https://www.cencenelec.eu/societal/Pages/default.aspx>

⁵ <https://www.cen.eu/work/areas/services/Pages/default.aspx>

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/european-multi-stakeholder-platform-ict-standardisation>

- a) Update web content on the ETUC STAND project⁷.
- b) Use of social media to inform a broader audience of the ETUC's work on standards
- c) Issue ETUC press release/standardisation e-newsletter.
- d) Develop ETUC positions on selected issues at stake, including positions associated to active contribution to public enquiries.
- e) Promote the three national seminars as well as publication of a public summary report on the main outcomes of the seminars, including policy recommendations to improve inclusiveness at the national level.
- f) Lunch-time briefing—or similar—organised by the ETUC to promote trade unions views on European standardisation.
- g) Promote ETUC publication material and leaflets internally as well as in external meetings.

Affiliates continue to be encouraged to contact the ETUC Secretariat with updates on standardisation challenges in their countries and sectors. Special emphasis is invited to bringing forward standardisation activities where labour/workers issues are directly or indirectly affected, as well as candidates to be experts. Particular encouragement will be given for experts from under-represented groups.

⁷ <https://www.etuc.org/issue/standardisation>