

ETUC Standardisation Newsletter - February 2025

Dear colleagues and friends,

The ETUC is pleased to share with you its newsletter on standardisation, bringing you regular updates on the ETUC's activities in this field. We are pleased to deliver information on European and international standardisation straight to your inbox. If you wish to receive additional information and/or documents related to the news presented below, feel free to contact us at standards@etuc.org.

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Revision of EU Regulation 1025/2012 on Standardisation Confirmed



Published on the same day as the latest meeting of the EU High-Level Forum on Standardisation (see more on the ETUC participation in the article below), the EU Competitive Compass confirms a much-awaited announcement: the EU legislative framework for standardisation is set to be revised.

The EU Commission is expected to present its proposal for a revision of EU Regulation 1025/2012 on Standardisation in the first half of 2026. The objective is to address the shortcomings identified in the evaluation of the law, and to speed up the development of systemic standards for the EU's resilience and twin transitions.

In the coming months, the EC will launch a call for evidence and collect stakeholder feedback to inform its proposal through a public consultation, which the ETUC will contribute to, as representative of millions of workers across Europe. The ETUC priorities, as set out in our most recent resolution on standardisation and adopted by the ETUC Executive Committee, are available [online](#).

ETUC at High-Level Forum on Standardisation, Chaired by Executive Vice-President Stéphane Séjourné



On 29 January, the third meeting of the EU High-Level Forum on Standardisation took place in Brussels, under the chairmanship of new EU Commission Executive Vice-President Stéphane Séjourné, strongly connecting EU standardisation policies to the new European competitiveness strategy.

Several speakers from industry federations, public authorities and societal organisations provided insights into standardisation. The ETUC was represented by Oliver Roethig (Regional Secretary at UNI Europa) and Ornella Cilona (Senior Policy Adviser at CGIL). The ETUC highlighted that standards are necessary for the EU single market and trade. However, the expansion of standardisation activities into new fields, including processes and workers' issues – in the remit of social dialogue – is problematic. Both technical and social standards must effectively be applied. The disregard of such standards – for example by Chinese companies such as Temu and Shein – undermines the European model. We therefore call for stronger policy for industry. Oliver Roethig concluded by pointing out that EU public procurement rules must include social conditionalities, and that eventually, this can become the focus of a new workstream of the High-Level Forum.

A Closer Look at How AI Standards are Being Developed



On 9 January, Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO) published its study, “[Bias baked in - How Big Tech sets its own AI standards](#)”. The report explores how standardisation is used in Europe to implement legislation, with a particular focus on the recently adopted AI Act. It sheds light on how private organisations are, in effect, writing the rules that will hold legal status in the EU.

In an interview with CEO, the ETUC shared insights into standardisation, drawing from its extensive experience in representing workers' views in the process. The ETUC explained that in Europe, standardisation plays a key role in supporting internal market legislation. In a public-private partnership, given laws establish the legal requirements that products must meet in order to enter the internal market, while standards define the technical specifications to demonstrate compliance with such laws.

Until now, standardisation has primarily been limited to product safety – particularly in supporting health and safety requirements. However, the AI Act marks the first time standards are being used to safeguard fundamental rights. This shift naturally raises concerns about who is de facto shaping these standards and the broader implications for AI governance.

The CEO study is largely in line with the ETUC position. Indeed, while the ETUC supports the elaboration of technical standards to facilitate trade and make products and services operational and “safe” to use, we argue that the European and international standardisation bodies are not legitimate fora for the coverage of societal issues, as their governance structure is not set up do so.

Business and industry – with sufficient resources and a financial interest in standard setting activities – can buy their way in and dominate standardisation outcomes. As such, it is not a democratic system (but a private system, with its own business interests).

Often overseen by the wider public (and even public authorities), technical standards provide the fine details that make numerous pieces of European legislation operational. Or put differently: whoever dominates technical standards, dominates the operational implementation of related legislative acts.

In Summer 2024, the German public broadcaster (SWR) came to a similar conclusion, albeit in relation to the rising cost of housing (see this [SWR Documentary](#)).

ETUC Speaks at Webinar: Implementing the EU AI Act Through Standards



On 4 February, over 350 participants joined the high-impact webinar, Implementing the EU AI Act through Standards, organised by the AI Standards Hub and the CEN-CENELEC JTC 21 AI Inclusiveness Task Group (TG).

Considering that technical standards will play a critical role in ensuring compliance with key requirements of the EU AI Act, the webinar provided a crucial opportunity for a wide range of stakeholders to learn about ongoing work within JTC 21, the committee responsible for developing these standards. The webinar focused in particular on the development of a European standard on AI Risk Management.

The ETUC, as leader of Inclusiveness TG, provided an overview of the group's mission and various efforts to broaden civil society input into the development of harmonised standards.

A follow-up workshop is planned for 5 March, during which civil society representatives will be offered a platform to contribute directly to the AI Risk Management standard.

For more details on the webinar, visit the AI Standards Hub: www.aistandardshub.org.

Gender-Responsive Standards



Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) standards have mostly been developed under the assumption that “one-size-fits all”. However, in reality, they can impact different groups of workers in hugely different ways. Therefore, OSH measures should acknowledge and address the specific needs and risks faced by a diverse workforce, including gender-based considerations. Since biological differences, social roles, and workplace inequalities significantly influence workers' exposure to hazards and their vulnerability to injury and illness, gender-responsive standards reject the "one-size-fits-all" approach.

The ETUC calls for gender-responsive measures in OHS and OHS standards. A recent example is the ETUC call for taking into account the differing anthropometrics of male and female workers when personal protective equipment is provided by their employer. We also asked for consideration of biological differences between male and female workers that affect their work and health. The ETUC made this request in the revision of ISO 45001:2018 ‘Occupational health and safety management systems — Requirements with guidance for use’. This international standard is used by many companies across Europe and specifies requirements for an occupational health and safety (OH&S) management system. In some countries, the standard is even referred to in national legislation and therefore plays a role in the implementation of OHS measures. The consideration of workers’ needs as well as the provision of adequate and effective prevention measures are part of ISO 45001. One of the ETUC objectives in the revision of the standard is to include a gender perspective in its requirements.

The [ETUI OHS Conference \(11-12 December 2024\)](#) addressed the integration of gender in occupational health and safety. The conference saw discussions on how gender influences workplace risks, health outcomes, and the effectiveness of current OSH measures with the aim of reshaping the future of occupational health by making it more inclusive and effective for everyone.

Rewriting the Guide for the Application of the EU Machinery Regulation



Machines are essential in many workplaces, allowing workers to perform tasks with greater speed, accuracy and efficiency. From the moment we clock in using computerised systems to the tools we use on production lines, machines are woven into the fabric of our daily working lives.

In Europe, the Machinery Directive – and as of 2027 the EU Machinery Regulation – sets the provisions for the health and safety of workers and citizens using machines. To ensure the uniform application of the Machinery Directive throughout the EU, the European Commission had prepared a Guide, supporting its first edition. The Guide provides practical explanations and is designed for everyone involved in applying the directive, including machinery manufacturers, importers, and distributors, Notified Bodies, OSH and consumer protection agencies, as well as officials from national administrations and market surveillance authorities.

With the introduction of new legal requirements brought by the adoption of the revised Machinery Regulation, the Guide will need updating. The European Commission has therefore set up a dedicated editorial group. A first meeting was held at the end of January to discuss the modalities of the group itself, together with Member State representatives, including how thematic, technical-level Working Groups may support its activities. As a next step, further stakeholders will be invited to contribute to this work. The ETUC is looking forward to providing targeted input to this development.

LO-Sweden National Meeting on Standardisation



LO-Sweden, one of the three Swedish affiliates of the ETUC, held a national meeting on standardisation on 27 and 28 January, near Stockholm.

In Sweden, national authorities actively support workers (and consumers) to participate in standard-setting activities. This allows many trade union experts to participate in the various mirror committees of SIS, the Swedish standardisation body. This has enabled the creation of a “wealth of knowledge” around standardisation, which is one of the objectives of the European Commission’s High-Level Forum on Standardisation.

The ETUC was invited to speak and provide background of its European activities on standardisation and as such further strengthen the collaboration between the ETUC and LO-Sweden.

CEPS Publication “Setting Standards for Critical Raw Materials”



The Energy, Resources and Climate Change (ERCC) unit at CEPS, a well-known Brussels-based think tank, has recently published a paper “Setting Standards for Critical Raw Materials – State of Play and Future Prospects” (January 2025).

The analysis, published under the EIT Raw Materials-KIC INSPIRES project, provides an assessment of technical standardisation in the context of Critical Raw Materials (CRMs), focusing in particular on the EU perspective. Starting from a general introduction to standardisation, focus is then placed on CRM-related standardisation specifically – with an overview of existing initiatives at both European and international level (in CEN and ISO respectively). After reflecting on the challenges and gaps in CRM standardisation (e.g. limited availability of technical expertise), the authors conclude with a number of policy recommendations. View the full report online: [Setting standards for critical raw materials - CEPS](#).

As indicated in the study, at both ISO and CEN level, a number of various technical committees (TCs) are dealing with standardisation in the field of CRMs. Two of the more recently created TCs include: ISO/PC 348 on “Sustainable raw materials” and CEN/TC 477 on “Sustainable production of raw materials from mining related activities”, both of which are expected to focus on the standardisation of ESG criteria for critical raw materials. While the exact focus and the specific standards these committees will be working on are yet to be defined, some level of focus on social matters is expected. What exactly this will entail remains to be seen. The ETUC is following the work of both committees, calling against the development of new standards on working conditions, and against the interference with issues that fall under the remit of legislation, social dialogue and collective bargaining.

10th Anniversary of the ETUC Standardisation Project



The ETUC Standardisation Project turns 10 years old! 2025 marks a decade since the ETUC began working on standardisation.

Standards affect workers! Standards are present everywhere in our daily lives and at the workplace. Initially associated with product safety and interoperability, their reach has extended to affect a wide range of issues such as occupational health and safety, AI, competences and training, service provision and privacy at work. For more on standardisation, our activities in the field, as well as success stories and achievements, visit our website: [Standardisation | ETUC](https://standardisation.etuc.org)

We take the opportunity to remind you that the new ETUC Standardisation Calendar for 2025 is also out. The paper table calendar has interesting facts and ideas around standards and their link with the world of work. Feel free to pass by the ETUC offices, to pick up your very own ETUC STAND calendar!

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