

UNECE standardization information

Worldwide harmonized regulations overcoming technical barriers to trade

UNECE would like to recall that its Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies develops and shares best practice in the area of technical regulations, standardization policies, and policies related to quality infrastructure as well as conformity assessment and market surveillance. It encourages and supports regulatory cooperation among members in specific sectors, such as the equipment used in installations with a high risk of explosion.

Last year, the Working Party held a Conference on "Safer products and workplaces, safer communities" during its annual session. The proceedings of the Conference have been published as part of the session report.

The next session of the Working Party is coming up from 2 to 3 December back-to-back with the World Standards Cooperation (WSC) workshop on Conformity Assessment and will be held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. This year the discussion will focus on conformity assessment aiming at coordinating the countries' conformity assessment procedures such as to avoid multiple certifications.

Also, a joint ITU-IEC-UNECE event on "Standards and regulations" will be held partly in Palais des Nations on 2-3 November just before the next WTO TBT November meeting. The event gives a perfect opportunity to learn about the many ways in which International Standards can support public policy goals at this IEC, ISO and UNECE conference and training course. It will look at how to reference standards in regulations, how standards can help implement policy commitments taken at the global level (e.g. sustainability, resilience and development goals), and much more. The event is a unique opportunity to connect national and international policymakers with standards developers, in order to share experience and best practices. The preliminary information on the event is available in the save the date note.

Another area of activity that is relevant to members of this Committee are the UNECE studies on regulatory and procedural barriers to trade which identify and recommend ways of reducing and or eliminating technical and procedural barriers to regional and international trade. The studies are based on an extensive study of the country's laws and by-laws, and on in-depth interviews to relevant stakeholders including the regulatory authorities, the national standardization bodies, the conformity assessment bodies, and the business community. The methodology for conducting the studies is available online and in printed form and can be used by other international organizations, as well as by the countries themselves, in evaluating existing TBTs. Currently, two studies based on this methodology – on Belarus and on Kazakhstan which are not WTO members have been completed. Another study on a recently accessed country, Tajikistan was published in the second half of 2014. As regards Tajikistan, a follow-up technical assistance project to tackle the barriers that have been

identified is being planned in cooperation with UNIDO. It will be part of the country's post-WTO accession plan.

As mentioned at the March session of the Committee on TBT the working party is reviewing its recommendation on the "International Model for Technical Harmonization. The latest draft revision of its text has been forwarded to the WTO Secretariat and working party invites comments to this draft latest by September 1.

As stated in the March 2015 Committee of TBT, UNECE would like to recall that its World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (WP.29) provides a regulatory framework for the market introduction of harmonized innovative vehicle technologies, while continuously improving global vehicle safety and environmental protection, while reduce technical barriers trade. This last element is of particular importance for this audience. TBTs in this sector can in fact be eliminated or significantly reduced for participating parties because once a vehicle or its parts are certified in accordance with adopted UN Global Technical Regulations or UN Regulations it can be delivered and sold worldwide among Contracting Parties.

These regulations are developed at WP.29 under two instruments called the 1998 and 1958 Agreements.

Under the 1998 Agreement harmonized technical prescriptions for vehicles are developed and established by consensus voting as Global Technical Regulations (GTRs). These GTRs then serve as the basis for setting harmonized national regulations, which attain high levels of vehicle safety, theft prevention, environmental protection and energy efficiency. The Agreement can also provide economic benefits by reducing regulatory compliance costs that can result from the need to satisfy differing regulatory requirements between the Contracting Parties. The Contracting Parties are currently exploring way to further improve the pace of adoption of new GTRs.

Under the 1958 Agreement, the Contracting Parties facilitate cross-border trade by developing UN Regulations that include the reciprocal acceptance of approvals of vehicle systems, parts and equipment. To address the issue of the reciprocal recognition of the entire vehicle, WP.29 launched the International Whole Vehicle Type Approval (IWVTA) project in March 2010.