

Standards & Gender Equality

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UNECE Working Party on: Regulatory cooperation & std policies (WP.6)

What is it:

- Intergovernmental body
- Participation by: authorities, regional & int'l org, standards-setting bodies, business, certification bodies, test houses, civil society
- From all UN Member States
- 1970 – 2015: 45+ years

Mandate:

- Standardization Regulatory cooperation Conformity assessment Accreditation Metrology Market surveillance Risk Management in regulatory frameworks Education on standards and standards related issues

Activities

- Develop and share info & best practice
- Develop and maintain a set of recommendations
- Regulatory convergence on specific industrial sectors

2030 Agenda: Why is it Important?

- It is the **only alternative to a development model that has become untenable** at the environmental, economic and social level
- Each member state **defines its own development strategy**, and is accountable for the results achieved within a process coordinated by the United Nations
- The implementation of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development calls for an **active engagement of all the components of our society** – from private companies to the public sector, from the civil society to philanthropic institutions, from universities and research centres to stakeholders involved in the dissemination of information and culture



Gender Equality & Sustainable Development Goals

- In addition to **SDG 5**, the gender dimension is reflected across other SDGs
 - Fighting against women poverty (**SDG 1**)
 - Decreasing maternal mortality (**SDG 3**)
 - Ensuring girls and women access to education (**SDG 4**)
 - Creating employment opportunities for women (**SDG 8**)
 - Fighting against gender-based violence (**SDG 16**)



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- In a number of fields, standards represent a subtle yet important barrier to the participation of women in **economic sectors that have become *de facto* male-dominated**
- As all products and services are designed according to specifications contained in standards, a **failure to explicitly analyse the needs of the different genders** contributes to strengthening rather than fighting gender inequality
- The **focus of standardization activities on the needs of women is insufficient:**
 - The share of women involved in standard-setting activities is low (~10%, source: UNECE)
 - None of the major standard-setting bodies has adopted an official gender strategy for the organisation and planning of their internal activities
 - There are no tools allowing for the analysis of existing standards through a gender lens
- The absence of this gender lens in the development of standards is poised to result in **further hindering women's participation in the workforce**



Examples of Standards for Women Empowerment

- The **South African Bureau of Standards** has proposed a standard for protective clothing to better meet the needs of women in the manufacturing industry and transform previously male-dominated workplaces
- The **Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves** has developed a standard that reduces women's exposure to smoke when cooking, so as to ease the time burden associated with household chores
- The **French Association for Standardization** has presented two certification labels, *Diversity* and *Equality*, both representing the effective and voluntary commitment of an organization to promote equal opportunities and cultural diversity, while preventing discrimination
- The **Réseau Normalization et Francophonie** has developed the project *Women, Youth and Standardization*. It aims at creating the conditions allowing to enforce the capacities of women and youth to apply standards in their company, in order to facilitate their integration in the formal economy
- **Icelandic Standards** presented the *Equal Wage Management System Standard* (IST 185), with a view to establishing a system that guarantees equal pay and working conditions for men and women working for the same employer

SABS

South African Bureau of Standards



afnor
GROUPE



ISTE



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- In 2016, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and its Working Group on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) launched the **Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative**, which aims to:
 - Strengthen the use of standards and technical regulations as powerful tools to achieve SDG 5
 - Integrate the gender lens in the development and implementation of both standards and technical regulations
 - Elaborate gender indicators and criteria that could be used in standards development
 - Identify and undertake actions to ensure that standards contribute to gender equality



Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development

- The activities of the Initiative culminated in the drafting of the **Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development**, developed by a working group composed of representatives from standardization bodies as well as experts on gender issues and women's empowerment
- The Declaration seeks to support national and international standardization bodies in **developing gender equality action plans** tailored to national and regional levels
- These plans will focus on selected priorities among the following alternative measures:
 - Examining existing standards to make sure they are not gender biased
 - Developing a methodology to ensure that standards currently under development are gender-responsive
 - Supporting increased participation of women in standardization activities
- The Declaration will be opened for signature on 14 May 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland. A number of national, regional, and international standards bodies are poised to sign on the day of the opening.



The Way Forward

- Develop **guidelines for the development of gendered standards and technical regulations**
- Create a **database with sex-disaggregated data** on women participation in standardization activities
- Establish a **Gender Expert Network for Standards**
- Promote **training materials** and exchange best practice
- Initiate the development of a **gendered standard**



Thank You!

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