



# Economic and Social Council

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## Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

### Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6)

#### Thirty-first session

Geneva, 24–26 November 2021

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative

## Report on activities of the Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative 2020–2021

Submitted by the secretariat

### *Summary*

In 2016, the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) created the Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative with the aim of improving gender balance in standards development and ensuring that the content and impact of standards, when implemented, are gender-responsive. This document reports on the progress in the work of this initiative in 2021.

#### *Proposed decision:*

“The Working Party adopts the *Report on activities of the Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative 2020–2021*. It encourages member States to engage in dialogue with standards bodies in their jurisdiction to become signatories of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) *Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development*. It further requests the secretariat to continue its awareness-raising efforts and to report on activities at the next session.”

## **I. Introduction**

1. The work of the ECE Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative (GRSI) has become more important than ever. As the pandemic continued to dominate people's lives and we all struggled to move out of lockdowns and restrictions in 2021, we also continued to learn more about how the pandemic more severely impacted on women. The inequalities of the impacts of the pandemic were not caused by the pandemic; the pandemic brought into stark relief underlying societal and structural inequalities. If we are ever to be able to eliminate these inequalities, we have to tackle the frameworks and structures which perpetuate them. Ensuring that all standards are gender-responsive is one very powerful mechanism for doing so. Gender-responsive standards will not only be better standards (for both men and women), they will ensure that the products, services and systems they relate to provide equal outcomes for the men and women using them and/or affected by them. Our focus for 2021 has therefore been on the activities of the project teams within GRSI (see below for more information) which are creating tools and resources to enable standards development organizations to create gender-responsive standards.

## **II. Project teams**

### **A. Project team 1 on knowledge sharing and training**

2. The experts of this project team are completing the design of a survey to identify and collect tools and resources, including training materials, from standards development organizations (SDOs). The aim is to gather as much information regarding tools and resources including training materials, research studies, gender action plans and any unmet needs to support the development of a gender-responsive standards resources hub for SDOs.

3. The draft is expected to be completed by November 2021 ready for distribution in the first quarter of 2022 with a pilot survey completed in December 2021/January 2022. The information will begin to be consolidated, ready for consultation with the other two project teams in mid-2022.

### **B. Project team 2 on a methodology for assessing and developing gender-responsive standards**

4. The experts of this project team are drafting guidelines on how to develop gender-responsive standards. A draft is expected shortly for WP.6 internal review, before a broader consultation. The expected audience for the guidelines are technical committee members and standards developers. The goal is to keep the document concise and practical. It addresses

- the need for gender-responsive standards;
- the recruitment and retention of women on technical committees and as participants in standards development;
- the holding of inclusive meetings; and
- the methods to ensure standards are gender-responsive regardless of who is on the committee of SDO.

### **C. Project team 3 on network development**

5. The experts of this project team have participated and will participate in a number of events to disseminate the work of GRSI:

- A parallel session during the International Conference on Sustainable Development 2021 on the theme “Achieving gender equality across all 17 SDGs by Closing Gender Gaps in Knowledge and Standards” scheduled for 21 September 2021<sup>1</sup>
  - A Commonwealth Standards Network session on the theme “UNECE Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative” on 30 March 2021<sup>2</sup>
6. Initial links have been established with the Working Party on Passive Safety (GRSP), a subsidiary body of the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (ECE WP.29) with the aim of tackling the root causes behind gender inequalities in outcomes from passive restraint systems in vehicles, including any role which standards may play. GRSI will continue to discuss how to formally support the work of the GRSP Chair during its November 2021 meeting.

### III. Meetings in 2021

7. There was one plenary meeting of GRSI in 2021 which explored standards as tools for women’s economic empowerment. This meeting was attended by 53 experts, 41 of whom were women. The session included presentations by the following entities:
- The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland presenting on the Government’s research conducted in the UK Aid and the Work and Opportunities for Women (WOW) programme funded by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
  - The Timewise Foundation of the Nesta Foundation presenting on its research about flexible working, equality and inclusion
  - The Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN) network presenting on their work to increase social and economic benefits for women participating in economic development or environment projects
  - UN-Women presenting on the impacts of the pandemic on women
  - The Standards Council of Canada (SCC) presenting about the World Trade Organization workshop on the role of gender in the development of standards on the topic of understanding why gender matters for standardization<sup>3</sup>
8. There were also meetings of the experts of the GRSI project teams as well as meetings of the secretariat and leadership of the initiative and the project teams.

### IV. Signatories of the Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development

9. As of this report the number of SDOs that are signatories of the ECE *Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development* stands at seventy-three. For a full list of signatories please see Annex.

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://ic-sd.org/> and <https://virtual.oxfordabstracts.com/#/event/public/1990/program>.

<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.commonwealthstandards.net/news/csn-session-unece-gender-responsive-standards-initiative-30th-march-2021-1300-1400-gmtutc-r140/?tab=comments>.

<sup>3</sup> See: [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/tbt\\_e/wksp\\_tbt\\_81220\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tbt_e/wksp_tbt_81220_e.htm).

## Annex

### **ECE Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development signatories**

1. The following SDOs of United Nations Member States have signed the Declaration as of September 2021:

Albania – General Directorate of Standardization  
Argentina – Instituto Argentino de Normalización y Certificación  
Austria – Austrian Standards International  
Bolivia – Instituto Boliviano de Normalización y Calidad  
Bosnia and Herzegovina – Institute for Standardization of Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Botswana – Botswana Bureau of Standards  
Brazil – Associação Brasileira de Normas Técnicas  
Canada – Standards Council of Canada  
Colombia – Instituto Colombiano de Normas Técnicas y Certificación  
Congo – Office Congolais de Contrôle  
Costa Rica – National Standards Body of Costa Rica  
Cyprus – Organisation for Standardisation  
Denmark – Danish Standards  
Dominican Republic – Instituto Dominicano para la Calidad  
Ecuador – Servicio Ecuatoriano de Normalización  
France – Association Française de Normalisation  
Gambia – The Gambia Standards Bureau  
Georgia – Georgian National Agency for Standards and Metrology  
Germany – Deutsches Institut für Normung  
Honduras – Organismo Hondureño de Normalización  
Iceland – Icelandic Standards  
India – Bureau of Indian Standards  
Ireland – National Standards Authority of Ireland  
Israel – Standards Institute of Israel  
Italy – Ente Italiano di Normazione  
Italy – Comitato Elettrotecnico Italiano  
Latvia – Latvian Standard  
Lithuania – Lithuanian Standards Board  
Luxembourg – Institut Luxembourgeois de la Normalisation, de l'Accréditation, de la Sécurité et qualité des produits et services  
Madagascar – Bureau des Normes de Madagascar  
Mali – Agence Malienne de Normalisation et de Promotion de la Qualité  
Malta – Malta Competition and Consumer Affairs Authority  
Mauritius – Mauritius Standards Bureau

Mexico – Dirección General de Normas  
 Morocco – Institut Marocain de Normalisation  
 Mozambique – Instituto Nacional de Normalização e Qualidade  
 Netherlands – Netherlands Standardization Institute  
 New Zealand – New Zealand IEC National Committee  
 New Zealand – Standards New Zealand  
 Norway – Standards Norway  
 Papua New Guinea – National Institute of Standards and Industrial Technology  
 Portugal – Instituto Português da Qualidade  
 Republic of Moldova – Institute for Standardization of Moldova  
 Rwanda – Rwanda Standards Board  
 Saint Kitts and Nevis – Saint Kitts and Nevis Bureau of Standard  
 Saint Lucia – Saint Lucia Bureau of Standards  
 Senegal – Association Sénégalaise de Normalisation  
 Serbia – Institute for Standardization of Serbia  
 South Africa – South African Bureau of Standards  
 Spain – Asociación Española de Normalización  
 Sweden – Swedish Institute for Standards  
 Switzerland – Swiss Association for Standardization  
 Thailand – Thai Industrial Standards Institute  
 Togo – Agence Togolaise de Normalisation  
 Trinidad and Tobago – Bureau of Standards  
 Turkey – Türk Standardlari Enstitüsü  
 United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – British Standards Institution  
 Uruguay – Instituto Uruguayo de Normas Técnicas

2. The following international SDOs have signed the Declaration as of September 2021:

African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO)  
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 ASTM International  
 European Committee for Standardization (CEN) & European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC)  
 Fairtrade International  
 The Gold Standard  
 International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)  
 International Organization for Standardization (ISO)  
 International Telecommunication Union (ITU)  
 Rainforest Alliance  
 Responsible Jewellery Council (RJC)  
 Round Table on Responsible Soy Association (RTRS)

The Standards and Metrology Institute for the Islamic Countries (SMIIC)

Verra

Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management  
(WOCAN)

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