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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques

Report on recent developments in the sectoral initiatives

Submitted by the subgroup Chair

Summary

This document presents the main results achieved by the sectoral initiatives under the Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (START) and the Initiative on Education on Standardization (START-Ed) as of July 2022, reports on the progress in the completion of the project plan and presents priorities for 2023.

Mandate

At its thirty-first session, the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) mandated the secretariat, START and START-Ed to continue to report on an annual basis on their activities. (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/2, paragraph 26, decision 8 and paragraph 28, decision 9)

Proposed decision

“The Working Party adopts the report on the sectoral initiatives. It endorses the START-Ed Focal Point Network terms of reference as well as the new module on standards-related environmental issues. It requests the Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (START) and the Initiative on Education on Standardization (START-Ed) to continue to report on an annual basis on these activities”.

I. Introduction

1. Regulatory cooperation on specific areas of activity is an important part of the work of WP.6, aiming to reduce non-tariff barriers to trade. Since its establishment in 1999, the STandardization And Regulatory Techniques (START) team has advocated that the content of technical regulations should revolve around the definition of essential requirements. The sectoral initiatives aim to contribute to this objective.
2. This report provides a summary from the annual meetings of the initiatives within this group during the WP.6 Forum on 7 June 2022. The initiatives each reviewed the progress under their areas of work and the plans for future work. Mr. Serguei Kouzmine was elected Chair of START for a two-year period; Mr. Frank Lienesch was elected Coordinator of the Sectoral Initiative on Equipment for Explosive Environments (EEE); Mr. Roman Samsonov was elected Coordinator of the Sectoral Initiative on Pipeline Safety; and Mr. Serguei Kouzmine was elected Coordinator of the Initiative on Education and Standardization (START-Ed).

II. Sectoral Initiative on Equipment for Explosive Environments

3. The Sectoral Initiative on Equipment for Explosive Environments was established in 2008 (ECE/TRADE/C/WP.6/2008/18) with an aim to develop common regulations in this sector based on *Recommendation L on International Model for Transnational Regulatory Cooperation Based on Good Regulatory Practice*. The document *A Common Regulatory Framework for Equipment Used in Environments with an Explosive Atmosphere* (ECE/TRADE/391) was developed with the support of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) in 2011.
4. The project works closely with the IEC System for Certification to Standards Relating to Equipment for Use in Explosive Atmospheres (IECEx). ECE and IECEx co-organized international conferences/workshops, the latest planned in Canada (5 to 7 September 2022). Initiative members actively encourage the adoption of IECEx standards.
5. Over the past period, work was still disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For the coming period, the Initiative plans to check the continued pertinence of the Common Regulatory Framework (ECE/TRADE/391) document on the topic especially in light of continued climate change and energy transition efforts. Green hydrogen is expected to be a key commodity in the future; the Initiative will look into any relevant guidance that could be useful in that area.

III. Sectoral Initiative on Pipeline Safety

6. The Sectoral Initiative Pipeline Safety was established in 2009 with a view to coordinate mandatory requirements for industrial and ecological safety, and to harmonize national approaches to safety regulation of pipelines. The Initiative aims to bring together all actors involved in pipelines from those that manage the pipeline systems and the processes of transport to the industry and independent third parties (conformity assessment bodies) as well as regulators.
7. The emergence of new systems for the transportation or distribution of products, in particular hydrogen and liquefied natural gas, require a more detailed consideration of changes in requirements and their harmonization. The Initiative plans to develop an ECE recommendation to ensure the safety of transboundary pipelines for the transportation of hydrogen that will provide participating countries a basis for the development of appropriate national legislation. This will be based on *Recommendation L* as well as the regulatory and technical documents and standards in the area of pipeline safety on the Standards for SDG Portal (<https://standards4sdgs.unece.org/>).

IV. Initiative on Education on Standardization

8. WP.6 and its experts have been advocating the relevance of general education about standardization since at least 1970 when *Recommendation I on Education on Standards-Related Issues* was adopted and Governments were called upon to include standardization in the curricula of educational institutions. The Initiative on Education on Standardization (START-Ed) has developed a 15-module model programme on standardization.

9. At its meeting during the WP.6 Forum on 7 June 2022, the Initiative discussed the potential of establishing a Focal Point Network of academic experts (individual professors, researchers, institutions, standards development bodies and member States) interested in including standardization in their training curricula and willing to share experiences and content. A draft terms of reference for such a Focal Point Network was finalized during this meeting and is presented in Annex I.

10. The Initiative also finalized the draft of a new module on standards-related environmental issues to be integrated into the model programme on standardization. The content for this new module is presented in Annex II. The draft module was circulated among several higher educational establishments prior to the meeting and feedback was received from Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia; School of Business, Okanagan College, Canada; University of Malta (Centre for Environmental Education & Research); University of Gloucestershire (School of Education and Humanities), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Deytec. Inc, United States of America.

Annex I

Terms of Reference of the START-Ed Focal Point Network

I. Introduction

1. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) promotes regulatory cooperation, standardization policies and activities which contribute towards reducing technical barriers to trade, while lowering risk and promoting sustainable development in all its dimensions.
2. Standards are a pervasive part of our daily life. Just reading this document on a computer implies hundreds of standards. International trade is influenced by such standards (for the accessibility of products onto a market, for the compliance to relevant regulations, for variations in duties and taxes, etc.), yet there is very little training for professionals on the topic. Engineers responsible for the conception of products may master the subject, but other departments such as transport, commercial, financial, or marketing often have no exposure to the topic. This is why it is so important to make sure that new generations are aware of what standards and regulations are and how they can be used to meet global goals and targets.
3. ECE WP.6 created the Initiative on Education on Standardization (START-Ed). The objective is to encourage universities, tertiary-level institutes, vocational training schools and other education and research institutions to integrate standardization and standards-related issues in their curricula. This initiative has proposed a fifteen-module plan to allow professors and trainers to integrate education on standardization into their programmes. These modules provide key insights into foundational aspects of international trade such as metrology, conformity assessment, market surveillance, risk management and other related areas.
4. In order to further promote education on standardization, ECE WP.6 proposes the establishment of a START-Ed Focal Point Network as detailed below.

II. Focal Point objectives and activities

5. The objective of the START-Ed Focal Points is to promote education on trade-related standardization.
6. The main activities of the START-Ed Focal Points are to:
 - Implement the START-Ed modules for education on standardization within their teaching programmes
 - Participate in START-Ed meeting calls to bring back best practices
 - Assist in enhancing the START-Ed modules to improve the current material and to help develop new material on related topics
 - Suggest other potential members for the Focal Point Network.

III. Meeting and working methods

7. ECE WP.6 serves as a forum for convening the Focal Points and enabling the cooperation between Focal Points. This will be part of the ECE WP.6 START-Ed Initiative. The network shall meet at least once annually and report on activities and plans to the ECE WP.6 annual session. Insofar as possible, meetings will be held virtually.
8. All new work items proposed by the Focal Point Network shall be under the framework of ECE WP.6 in terms of both substance and the procedural development. Any reports, guides, brochures, or other deliverables should be presented to the ECE WP.6 annual session for final endorsement by member States and where appropriate to the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards.

9. The Focal Point Network will be supported by the ECE WP.6 secretariat within the limit of its resources.

IV. Types of Focal Points and participation

10. Academic experts and academic institutions participate in the Focal Point Network on a voluntary basis and are responsible for their own funding to participate.

- Academic expert focal points are individuals such as the professors, educational experts and PhD researchers interested in implementing education on trade-related standardization within their individual curricula.
- Institutional focal points are universities, tertiary-level institutes, training schools, etc. interested in integrating education on trade-related standardization within their programmes.
- Standards development bodies may wish to participate as an institution to provide relevant input.

11. Focal points are self-nominated by expressing their intention to the ECE WP.6 secretariat by email.

- Academic expert focal points are asked to provide their name, country where they are teaching, the names of institutions where they are teaching, subjects that they are teaching and their contact details.
- Institutional focal points are asked to provide a letter from their executive office expressing their intention to participate, detailing the institution name, country, subject areas where the programme would be used and the nomination of an individual who would represent the institution at the meetings with their contact details. An institutional focal point could nominate multiple experts to join in their name.
- Standards development bodies interested in participating are asked to provide a letter from their executive office expressing their intention to participate, detailing the body name, country and the nomination of an individual who would represent the body at the meetings with their contact details. A standards development body could nominate multiple experts to join in their name.

12. During meetings, no distinction is made between academic expert focal points and institutional focal points. Unless an official endorsement has been received from a United Nations Member State, the Focal Points only represent their own expertise and do not represent any country.

13. In the event that a United Nations Member State would be interested to participate in the Focal Point network, they are welcome to express their intention to the ECE WP.6 secretariat by email through their Geneva-based Permanent Mission, detailing the country name, the eventual institutions that would participate under them and the relevant contact details. Multiple experts could be nominated under a Member State participation and in this case, they would represent an official position of their country.

14. Experts from any United Nations Member State are welcome to join the START-Ed Focal Point network.

15. To contact the ECE WP.6 secretariat, please write to regulatory.cooperation@un.org.

16. More on the ECE WP.6 education on standardization initiative: <https://unece.org/trade/wp6/thematic-areas/education>.

Annex II

New module on standards-related environmental issues

I. Introduction

1. Today climate change has become one of the most acute global challenges for humankind. The necessity to protect the environment and to make the activities of humankind sustainable became evident for society and has already led to a number of global green initiatives on various levels (including international).

2. Environmental issues today influence the life of every person and activity of every business. Understanding the environmental footprint and diminishing it, adaptation of the society through new sustainable consumption and industrial patterns are essential for consumers and companies. Various environment-friendly standards and practices can contribute to reducing anthropogenic pressure on the environment.

II. Issues for consideration

3. Climate change. Human (anthropogenic) impact on the environment includes changes to biophysical environments and to ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources caused directly or indirectly by humans, including global warming, environmental degradation and global ecological crisis. Quality of soil, water, air; agro-ecosystems. Necessity of ecological risks/impact mitigation. Global monetary assessment of ecosystems. Nature capital.

- Concepts of sustainable development, climate change, green economy, circular economy, responsible consumption.
- Renewable energy (solar, wind, hydro, wave, tidal) and fossil fuels (oil, coal, gas).
- Global initiatives: United Nations 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals; Paris Agreement on climate change (2015); United Nations Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal; United Nations Global Compact; Sustainable Energy for All; UNEP initiatives; Global financing of environmental goods.
- National and regional initiatives: Environmental/carbon footprint and carbon tax. Corporate climate (social) responsibility (ISO 26000:2010). ISO standards on adaptation to climate change (ISO 14090:2019; ISO 14091:2021); on sustainable finance (ISO 32210 – principles and guidance). Sustainable Finance Ecosystem (SFE). Standards under development for the circular economy (ISO/TC 323).
- National environmental legislation. State environmental authorities and controls.
- Principles of environmental management (company, industry, region, country levels). Environmental disclosure standards and practices (Global Reporting Initiative (GRI); Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) standards, etc.). European Union guidelines on corporate disclosure of climate-related information.
- Environmentally sustainable company activities and supply chains.
- Environmental impact assessment; environmental consequences of a proposed activity (their incorporation into planning, design, approval and implementation stages).
- Resources and energy efficiency management.
- Environmental management system standards (ISO 14000 series); their relationship to quality management standards (ISO 9000 series), safety management standards (OHSAS 18000 series) and energy management standards (ISO 50000 series).
- Environmental policy of the company; its impact. Setting goals and objectives of the organization in the field of environmental management.

- Performance indicators: management effectiveness, environmental performance, audit, etc.
 - Time schedule: 1 teaching unit (90 minutes).
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