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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)

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques

## Report of activities of the Education on Standardization Initiative 2022–2023

Submitted by the subgroup Chair\*

### *Summary*

The Education on Standardization Initiative has been established as a platform for cooperation and exchange of experiences on teaching standards and on methodological and practical support to teachers in 2013. This document reports on the progress in the work of the area for the period 2022–2023.

### *Mandate*

At its thirty-second session, the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) mandated the secretariat and the Education on Standardization Initiative to report on an annual basis on these activities (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/2, paragraph 29, decision 7).

### *Proposed decision*

“The Working Party adopts the *Report of the activities of the Education on Standardization Initiative 2022–2023*. It requests the initiative to continue to report on an annual basis on these activities.”

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\* This document is submitted under the responsibility of the subgroup Chair and has not been subject to a substantive clearance procedure through the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division Director. This document has not been edited by a professional editor.

## I. Introduction

1. 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. This recommendation was updated in 2012, then subsequently, the Education on Standardization Initiative developed a 16-module model programme on standardization. Education on standardization is important in both a traditional approach (to technical students, standards professionals and engineers) as well as an innovative approach (to non-technical students, managers and stakeholders from civil society).

2. During the WP.6 thirty-second annual session, the Education on Standardization Focal Point Network (individual professors, researchers, institutions, standards development bodies and member States) grouped together academic experts interested in including standardization in their training curricula and willing to share experiences and content was endorsed. The Focal Point Network had a meeting on 1 March 2023 (attended by 38 experts, 25 were women) and the initiative subsequently had a meeting on 26 May 2023 (attended by 22 experts, 12 were women).

## II. Report on progress of activities 2022–2023

3. The Education on Standardization Initiative has made good progress on the activities which were defined in the WP.6 Programme of work (PoW) for 2023 (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2022/12).

- In support of paragraph 18(a), the initiative has continued to explore labour market requirements regarding new skills and competences of graduates, notably with a presentation from Linguaphone of France at its May 2023 meeting.
- In support of paragraph 18(b), the Economic Commission for Europe LearnQI platform<sup>1</sup> was launched during this period with modules on market surveillance, conformity assessment, risk management and gender-responsive standards.
- In support of paragraph 18(e), the Education on Standardization Focal Point Network organized a virtual meeting on 1 March 2023 on the theme “Bringing standards to supply chain experts”, the results of which are integrated into this report.

## III. Impact and implementation

### A. Return on experiences / best practices

4. The University of Belgrade of Serbia shared their experiences on teaching non-technical students since 1969. The students in the fields of information technology, management and organization must take a study programme on quality management and standardization, available both in Serbian and English languages. This course utilizes a textbook containing more than twenty case studies and organized in the following subject matter headings:

- Why is knowledge about standardization important in modern business?
- Standardization and standards definitions
- User of standards and objectives of standardization
- Types of standardization and classifications of standards

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<sup>1</sup> <https://learnqi.unece.org/>

- Importance and benefits of standards implementation
- History of standardization
- Organizations for standardization
- Standardization systems
- European Union, United States of America, People's Republic of China
- Consortia-based standardization
- Company standardization
- Legal aspects of standardization

5. The College of Economics and Management from the Jiliang University elaborated on the importance of education on standardization in China. In terms of higher education, a multilevel standardization professional education system has been established from the bachelor's degree to the master's degree. In terms of talent training, a multi-agency standardized vocational education and training system has been developed. Jiliang University underlined the need to bring more standardization knowledge to technical experts, notably in the fields of digital standardization and supply chain standardization.

6. The Office of Standards, Metrology and Testing (SOSMT) of Slovakia reported on the training on standardization they provide both on nationally developed Slovak technical standards and of international or European standards. The training targets members of technical committees, students (high school, specialized secondary schools, university), young professionals and the general public.

7. Linguaphone underlined the labour market requirements for standards-related skills and competencies in France. The objectives of the requirements are enhancing the professional development of individuals, better alignment of workforce skills with market needs and improvement of productivity and effectiveness of organizations. Four areas of heightened interest were identified in the French market:

- Training of facilitators and continuing professional development where needs are to qualify, describe and evaluate the required training skills and to monitor and ensure the continuous development of trainers' skills
- Skills management systems where companies and organizations are looking for employees with skills that are better suited and adaptable to new market challenges
- Students' orientation and counselling services where adequate guidance based on students' skills and interests can lead them to reach their full potential
- Soft skills development where a standard guide should be developed that defines the concept of soft skills and creating a coherent list of soft skills and their definitions as per the needs of employers

## **B. Relation with other organizations' work**

8. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) seems to be considering reviving its project on education on standardization. It is recalled that in the mid-2000s, ISO organized a series of studies on the use of standards by companies, as well as held various meetings and events in some of which the WP.6 Education on Standardization Initiative was involved.

9. It is recalled that WP.6 has a liaison status at ISO/TC 232 "Education and learning services" which allows to keep delegations aware of the latest developments in international standardization on education. For example, information on standards related skills and competences presented to the Education on Standardization Initiative May 2023 yearly meeting (as mentioned above) was a continuation of the debate that originated at ISO/TC 232.

10. In 2023 ISO/TC 262 completed its work of a new technical specification, ISO/PRF TS 21030 “Educational organizations – Requirements for bodies providing audit and certification of educational organizations management systems”. The final draft of this technical specification was disseminated to the technical committee’s members, latest comments were received, and the agreed version was sent to ISO for publication. It is expected that the new technical specification (ISO/TS 21030) will be published / released for use in late autumn 2023.

#### **IV. Pertinence of the topic today**

11. Since the 2015 adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the establishment of Agenda 2030, the interest in and importance of standards has increased manifold. Mapping of standards to different SDGs by various standards development organizations is a proof of continued and increased interest in further gathering information and learning about standards. This is best expressed in a 2020 publication “Sustainable Development. Knowledge and Education About Standardization”,<sup>2</sup> that shows how essential standardization is for sustainability and includes a wealth of best practices and case studies.

12. The practical implementation of the new environmental module, which was endorsed at the thirty-second session of WP.6, is expected to contribute to increased awareness raising of the current climate change challenges.

#### **V. Future directions**

13. It was suggested that the ECE Education on Standardization Initiative continue the work that it has produced since 2013. This would include evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of education on standardization, clarifying the composition of each type of course, further enhancing a network of experts and educational institutions, and capturing existing curricula on the topic.

14. It was also suggested that the content for the current model modules should be further developed in order to help non-technical professors to propose such courses in their non-technical curricula. Ideally, e-learning courses should be developed for each of the core modules, allowing professors to suggest to their students to learn the content online and then discuss how standardization and related topics affect their professional area of expertise. This would allow to bring education on standardization to non-technical students, managers and stakeholders from civil society.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-28715-3>