

Terms of reference of the
Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards
(ToS-GRS)



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Terms of Reference of the Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards (ToS-GRS)

A. Establishment of the Team of Specialists

1. The Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) Gender-Responsive Standards Initiative (GRSI) was started following decision 4 of the 2016 WP.6 annual session (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2016/2, paragraph 20). Since then, it has delivered Recommendation U on Gender-Responsive Standards and a Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development which has been signed by over eighty standards development organizations. At the thirty-first annual session of WP.6 in 2021 GRSI recommended the establishment of a Team of Specialists to continue this work (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2021/2, paragraph 29).

2. GRSI noted multiple times throughout its meetings since 2016 that gender mainstreaming is not a one-off activity but requires long-term investments. The network of gender focal points which has been established through the Recommendation U and the Declaration establishes a de facto Team of Specialists internationally which will require a forum to continue to exchange on best practices and to develop further guidance on the topic. It is for this reason that a Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards (GRS) was proposed and approved at the seventh session of the Steering Committee on Trade and Standards (decision 2022-05) and subsequently approved by the ECE Executive Committee at its 124th meeting on 30 September 2022.

B. Objectives of the Team of Specialists

3. Standards have a pervasive and influential role in society. Standards bodies continue to face unequal gender representation in the technical committees that develop standards and in their governance structures. They lack specific tools for the evaluation of the potential impact of standards on women's health, safety, well-being and agency. Gender equality is a human right to which gender-responsive standards contribute. The gender-responsiveness of standards will benefit all of society, and also will support the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4. The general task of the Team of Specialists on GRS is to contribute to the activities of WP.6 aimed at ensuring gender mainstreaming in standards development.

5. The specific tasks of the Team of Specialists are to:

- provide a forum to identify and exchange best practices in gender-responsive standards development on a national / regional / international level among all concerned stakeholders
- encourage the adoption of the Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development and assist signatories to effectively implement the Declaration
- increase transparency and attract attention to the responsibilities of public authorities and standards development organizations to strive to create a standards development environment which enables gender inclusivity and equality
- promote (and when necessary initiate) coherent best practices and elaborate relevant recommendations concerning gender-responsive standards within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region and beyond.

C. Composition of the Team of Specialists, its membership and participation in its meetings

6. Members of the Team of Specialists are the gender focal points of the signatories of the *Declaration for Gender-Responsive Standards and Standards Development* as well as representatives from ECE member States and other United Nations Member States.

7. The Team of Specialists is open to participation by experts from international organizations as well as to representatives of the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as observers in their personal capacity.

8. United Nations Member States, international organizations, standards development organizations, NGOs and private sector participants are encouraged to consider gender balance when nominating representatives to participate in the Team of Specialists.

9. The Team of Specialists may establish project teams of experts to prepare projects requiring specific expertise, which are expected to become a part of the general activities of the Team of Specialists. The Team of Specialists can work with interested Governments and organizations on financing and implementation of such projects.

D. Governance

10. The Team of Specialists is guided by its Chair, supported by one or two Vice-Chairs, in accordance with the Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of teams of specialists within UNECE (ECE/EX/2/Rev.1). The Chair and Vice-Chair(s) shall be appointed at the first meeting of the group.

11. It is the responsibility of the Chair that the objectives of the Team of Specialists are met and follow the relevant sections of the WP.6 programme of work.

12. Members of the Team of Specialists, as resources permit, undertake the substantive work, including the preparation of documentation for the meetings and the reports to be submitted to the WP.6 annual sessions.

13. The ECE secretariat will provide necessary support to the Team of Specialists and its rapporteur groups / project teams within available resources.

14. The Bureau and members of the Team of Specialists are encouraged to support the secretariat in mobilizing extrabudgetary resources to facilitate the work of GRS.

E. Reporting

15. The Team of Specialists works under the guidance of WP.6, in accordance with terms of reference and working practices adopted by WP.6 and reports to it. The Team of Specialists works on the understanding that its final reports, proposals or recommendations will be decided by WP.6 as an intergovernmental body.