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## Economic Commission for Europe

Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards

### Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies

#### Thirtieth session

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Item 14 of the provisional agenda

**Programme of Work for 2021**

## **Programme of Work of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies for 2021**

**Submitted by the secretariat**

### *Summary:*

This document presents the details “Programme of Work of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies” based on the Programme of Work of the Trade Subprogramme for 2021 (ECE/CTCS/2020/INF.2) that was adopted in a silence procedure on 27 July 2020 following the virtual informal consultations of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards on 29 June 2020.

### *Proposed decision:*

“The Working Party adopts the Programme of Work of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies for 2021.”

## **I. Introduction**

1. The present document sets out the draft “Programme of Work of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies” for 2021 reflecting the annual budgetary cycle of the United Nations secretariat since 2019. It is based upon the Programme of Work of the Trade Subprogramme for 2021 (ECE/CTCS/2020/INF.2) that was adopted in a silence procedure on 27 July 2020 following the virtual informal consultations of the Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards on 29 June 2020.

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2. The objective of the Working Party is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In attaining its objective, the Working Party builds on cross-sectoral collaboration with other subprogrammes in relevant ECE nexus areas where multiple SDGs converge<sup>1</sup> and on well-established cooperation with external partners. This type of collaboration enables the subprogramme to maximize existing synergies, increase the efficiency of its work and have a multiplying effect on the impact of its actions to support countries to implement the SDGs.

3. The deliverables of the subprogramme fall into the following main categories: (a) facilitation of the intergovernmental process and expert groups; (b) generation and transfer of knowledge, including technical cooperation projects, training events, seminars, workshops, and publications; (c) other substantive deliverables, and (d) communication deliverables.

## II. Objective and alignment with the SDGs

4. As per its terms of reference, the objective of the Working Party is to: “serve as a forum for the exchange of information on developments and experiences in the areas of technical regulations, standardization, conformity assessment and related activities at the national, regional and international levels”<sup>2</sup>.

5. The responsibility for the subprogramme is vested in the Regulatory Cooperation Unit of the Market Access Section of the Economic Cooperation and Trade Division.

6. The objective is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 8, “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”, and in particular Target 8.4: “Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation”.

7. The objective is also aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 5, “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, and in particular Target 5.5: “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life”.

8. Further the objective is aligned with SDG 12, “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”, particularly as regards target 2.6 “Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle”; target 12.7 “Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities”; target 12.8 “By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature”; and target 12.A “Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

9. Additionally, the objective is aligned with SDG 11, with an emphasis on SDG 11.5, “Significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters”, and SDG 9 “Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure”, notably as regards quality infrastructure.

10. Finally, the objective is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 17, “Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development”.

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<sup>1</sup> The ECE nexus areas are as follows: 1) Sustainable use of natural resources; 2) Sustainable and smart cities for all ages; 3) Sustainable mobility and smart connectivity; and 4) Measuring and monitoring the SDGs.

<sup>2</sup> Please refer to the Annex of document TRADE/2004/11.

with an emphasis on: promoting a multilateral trading system; increasing the exports of developing countries and enhancing the use of information and communications technology.

### **III. Highlighted expected achievement during 2021**

#### **Support to Gender Responsive Standardization**

11. Lack of awareness about Gender-Responsive Standards is perpetuated by the absence of a defined methodology to assess standards. Many standards bodies operate without a policy for mainstreaming gender in their activities and in the management of their organizations. This lack of understanding, and the absence of a clear framework of examination, represents the greatest challenge to the implementation of signatory gender action plans. The UNECE “Gender Responsive Standards Initiative” aims at providing a practical way forward for standards bodies wishing to take a step towards making the standards they develop and the standards development process they follow gender responsive. The initiative started work in 2016, in response to a mandate by the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6). It aims to: strengthen the use of standards and technical regulations as powerful tools to attain SDG 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls); to integrate a gender lens in the development of both standards and technical regulations; and to elaborate gender indicators and criteria that could be used in standards development.

12. In response to this challenge, the Working Party will further the implementation of the Recommendation U on “Gender Responsive standards” and encourage remaining national standards bodies and relevant standards developers to sign the Declaration on “Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development”, while working with signatories to develop and implement their respective gender action plans. This will enhance the use of standards and technical regulations as tools for implementation of Agenda 2030; mainstream a gender perspective in the development and implementation of standards; and ensure a gender perspective in the development and enforcement of technical regulations.

13. In pursuing this objective to strengthen stakeholder understanding of gender responsive standards and develop a suite of gender-responsive standards resources, in 2021 the Working Party will leverage and grow the expert Working Groups of the Gender Responsive Standards Initiative (GRSI). The three Working Groups – i.e. 1. Knowledge Sharing and Best Practice; 2. Gender Responsive Standards Methodology; and 3. Network Development – promote collaboration, maximize existing synergies and hasten the availability of sustainable solutions (e.g. awareness-raising training material, a gender-responsive standards methodology), which support signatories to create and implement organizational gender action plans.

14. The need to continue to raise awareness of the value of Gender Sensitive Standards, amongst signatories and policymakers, was buttressed by the feedback gathered from Gender Responsive Standards Initiative meetings. Attendees to these meetings expressed and emphasized the importance of case studies, necessary to underscore ‘real world’ implications of gendered standards; and training resources, to allow signatories to better understand gender-responsive standards and the steps to develop and implement an organizational gender action plan.

15. Efforts to provide a guided practice for the development of organizational gender action plans are increasingly necessary. In the first quarter of 2020, the Working Party welcomed an additional twenty signatory bodies. In 2021, the number of signatories to the Declaration will surpass 100 and it is pivotal that the Working Party has a supportive infrastructure of clearly defined, SDG 5-related case studies and awareness-raising materials

16. To facilitate transparency and the on-going participation of signatories, the Working Groups will continue to develop the Gender Responsive Standards Initiative platform. This repository will be expanded to host documentation (progress reports, meeting notes, presentations) and action plans related to the Working Groups. This will result in greater harmonization and provide GRSI meeting participants with a logical, documentary chain of the activities and outputs of the GRSI and associated working groups.

17. Further, the Working Party will assist Working Group experts to finalize their respective plans of action, report to the bi-monthly meetings of the GRSI on their progress and deliver on their objectives in the agreed timeframe. The Working Party will convene a quarterly meeting of the Working Group leads to discuss progress and identify areas of synergy between groups, national standards bodies and international organizations.

18. Additionally, the Working Party will continue to expand the Portal on Standards for the SDGs and encourage national standards bodies and voluntary sustainability standards developers to submit expert commentaries and case studies, which demonstrate the application of standards for sustainable development. The Working Party will prioritize the continued mapping of standards and work with standards developers to leverage innovative instruments for the mapping of remaining SDGs.

19. The development of the portal and the outreach activities will support policymakers in identifying, adopting and implementing standards-based and risk-based regulatory practices in support of the SDGs. As part of the Standards for SDGs project, the Working Party will host a series of trainings on gender-responsive standards and the use of standards as tools for sustainable development. It is anticipated that these will be convened in the virtual space.

20. The highlighted activities – namely the continued development of the Standards for the SDGs portal and the support to the implementation of awareness-raising tools – will contribute to the planned result – i.e. the continued support to Member States in the uptake of standards for the achievement of the SDGs. This in turn will contribute to the overall objective of the Working Party, which is to serve as a forum for the exchange of information on developments and experiences in the areas of technical regulations, standardization, conformity assessment and related activities at the national, regional and international levels.

#### IV. External factors

21. The Regulatory Cooperation Unit is expected to achieve its objective on the assumption that: (a) there is political will and cooperation among Governments, standards bodies and other key quality infrastructure institutions; (b) there is demand for ECE standards and recommendations; (c) Member States provide the necessary information and support; (d) there is active participation by experts in ECE technical meetings; and (e) donor support for the work of the subprogramme is adequate in view of the COVID-19 pandemic and the freeze of Regular Budget expenditure affecting parts of the work of the secretariat.

#### V. Deliverables to be implemented in 2021

22. The mandates provide the legislative framework for its deliverables. Table below lists all deliverables, by category and sub-category, for the year 2021 that are expected to contribute to the attainment of the objective of WP.6 stated above.

<i>Deliverables</i>	<i>2021 planned</i>
<b>Quantified deliverables</b>	
<b>A. Facilitation of the intergovernmental process and expert bodies</b>	

<i>Deliverables</i>	<i>2021 planned</i>
<b>Parliamentary documentation</b> (number of documents)	
Documentation for the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies	13
<b>Substantive services for meetings</b> (number of three-hour meetings)	
6. Meetings of Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies	5
<b>B. Generation and transfer of knowledge</b>	
<b>Seminars, workshops and training events</b> (number of days)	
13. Workshops for policymakers and experts in low- and middle-income countries in the ECE region on trade procedures, supply chain management, conformity assessment and market surveillance and women entrepreneurship	3
<b>Publications</b> (number of publications)	
Publications on the Guides on Trade standards in the following areas: traceability and risk management; e-business; education; and sustainable development	1
Publication on Risk-Based Inspections and Disaster and sustainable development	1
<b>Technical materials</b> (number of materials)	
22. Material on trade standards	2
<b>C. Substantive deliverables</b>	
<b>Consultation, advice and advocacy:</b> Advisory services to Government officials and other stakeholders in ECE member States on trade facilitation and electronic business, agricultural quality standards, regulatory cooperation and standardization and regulatory and procedural barriers to trade	4
<b>Fact-finding, monitoring missions:</b> fact finding missions in ECE member States on trade facilitation and electronic business, agricultural quality standards, regulatory cooperation and standardization and regulatory and procedural barriers to trade	4
<b>D. Communication deliverables</b>	
<b>Outreach programmes, special events and information materials:</b> Booklets, fact sheets, information brochures	
<b>External and media relations:</b> Annual set of press releases for the Unit	
<b>Digital platforms and multimedia content:</b> Update and maintenance of the website and databases of the subprogramme as well as of the portal on "Standards for the SDGs"	

## VI. List of planned activities and outputs of WP.6 in 2021

23. Within this broad mandate, the Secretariat proposes to undertake the following activities:

### *Meetings*

- (a) To prepare and service the 31<sup>th</sup> annual session of the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies
  - 13 documents
  - 3 half day meetings
  - Reporting
- (b) Support the work under the sectoral initiatives.
- (c) To prepare and service the 19<sup>th</sup> MARS Group Annual meeting
  - Organize 2 webinars
  - Update the online database on market surveillance

- Update the information on global and regional market surveillance networks
  - Finalize the Market Surveillance Model initiative
  - Reporting
- (d) To prepare and service 6 webinars of the Group of Experts on Risk Management in Regulatory Systems (GRM):
- Collaborate with ISO/TC 262 and ISO/TC 292 in developing work on disruption related and supply chain risks
  - Identify and involve regulators in the group’s work: in particular Chief Risk Management Officers
  - Finalize recommendation V
  - Cooperate with ITC on the finalization of the publication “Facilitating trade for business through integrated risk management: Guide for border regulatory agencies and any follow up capacity-building activities
- (e) To support the activities on “Education on Standards-related issues”
- Organize two webinar meetings
  - Continue the cooperation with the League of European Research Universities and the University of Geneva
- (f) To promote and advocate for the use of standards in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda:
- Contribute to UNECE and UN-wide initiatives on SDG implementation and support the participation of standards organizations
  - Contribute to the work of the UNECE Nexuses
- (g) To prepare and service 6 webinars of the Gender Responsive Standards initiative
- (h) Cooperation with the World Trade Organization: WP.6 will participate in the meetings of the WTO Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement in 2020 and provide updates on its activities at each of them.

## **VII. Additional resources being sought**

24. If additional resources can be secured, the Working Party will:
- (a) Respond to requests for capacity-building by member States.
  - (b) Support the implementation of UNECE WP.6 Recommendations by member States, as appropriate.
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