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Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques

Report on activities under the Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques 2023–2024

Submitted by the subgroup Chair*

Summary

This document presents the strategic directions of the Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (START) and its subgroups as discussed at the twenty-fourth annual meeting of the START group and its initiatives on 5 April 2024.

Mandate

At its thirty-third session, the Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) mandated the secretariat and the START to continue to report on an annual basis on these activities (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/2, paragraph 28, decision 9) and requested the education on standardization initiative to report on an annual basis (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/2, paragraph 31, decision 10).

Proposed decision

“Member States adopted the *Report on activities under the Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques 2023–2024* (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/10). They requested the secretariat and the Ad Hoc Team of Specialists to research on how best to promote the existing common regulatory arrangements (CRA) and to continue to report on an annual basis on the activities under the START including on the education for standardization initiative.”

* This document is submitted under the responsibility of the subgroup Chair. This document has not been edited by a professional editor.

I. Introduction

1. The Ad Hoc Team of Specialists on Standardization and Regulatory Techniques (START) was established in 1999 with an aim to promote international regulatory cooperation on product technical regulations. These regulations define safety and health requirements which may be unique to the needs and circumstances of each country and can result in higher compliance costs when traders approach multiple markets. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) *Recommendation L on International Model for Transnational Regulatory Cooperation Based on Good Regulatory Practice* provides the basis of this cooperation through common regulatory arrangements (CRA). Several initiatives to promote CRA have been launched under START, including on telecom, cybersecurity, earth-moving machinery, equipment for explosive environment and pipeline safety. A further initiative was created in 2012 on education about standardization, based on the ECE *Recommendation I on Education on Standards-Related Issues*.

2. This report spans the period from July 2023 to May 2024. At its twenty-fourth annual meeting on 5 April 2024 (60 participants/30 women), the membership of the START confirmed the continuation of appointment of Ronald Tse of Canada as Chair. The coordinators of the sectoral initiatives for equipment used in environments with an explosive atmosphere (SIEEE) and for pipeline safety (SIPS) continue as previously. The coordinator of the education on standardization initiative (START-ED) stepped down in 2023; the membership appointed Vladimir Hiadlovský (Slovak Republic) as coordinator.

II. Report on activities

3. The START reviewed and revised the *Recommendation L* (for approval at the thirty-fourth WP.6 annual session, see ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/13) as per the Programme of work 2024 (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/14, paragraph 10a). It was confirmed that this mechanism for regulatory harmonization and cooperation remains very pertinent today; the revision is light, enlarging the text to cover systems, processes and services as well as products also clearly. The standardization section was removed and integrated into the other sections (as standards are expected to be cited throughout when they exist). And the title was slightly modified to become *Recommendation L on an International Model for Product/Service Conformity Based on Transnational Regulatory Cooperation*, in order to clarify that the recommendation is about product/service conformity.

4. The Bureau of WP.6 launched a CRA on the conformity of products/services with embedded artificial intelligence (AI) or other digital technologies. This project regroups the other subgroups of WP.6 and builds upon the paper which was presented to the thirty-third WP.6 annual session (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/9). The project team has brought together experts from many different horizons and the work done has resulted in document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/11 presented to the thirty-fourth session for approval as per the Programme of work 2024 (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/14, paragraph 10e).

A. Sectoral initiative on equipment for explosive environments

5. The presence of the ECE *CRA for Equipment Used in Environments with an Explosive Atmosphere*¹ as well as the presence of ECE at the meetings of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) System for Certification to Standards Relating to Equipment for use in Explosive Atmospheres (IECEx System) has been helpful especially with developing and transitional economies to demonstrate the need of such international regulatory cooperation and the adoption of the principles in the CRA. This CRA is also highly relevant in terms of security of the environment and people. A global approach facilitates and accelerates the process of defining standards; moving forward, this CRA is used as a reference in the work of the START on hydrogen (see SIPS).

¹ *Common Regulatory Framework for Equipment Used in Environments with an Explosive Atmosphere* (ECE/TRADE/391/Rev.1), 2022: <https://unece.org/info/Trade/WP.6/pub/378872>

B. Sectoral initiative on pipeline safety

6. In 2023, the SIPS launched a project to create a CRA for trunk pipeline safety in relation to hydrogen as per the Programme of work 2024 (ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2023/14, paragraph 10b). The team has completed the model questionnaire (see annex) related to this topic and is currently collecting responses. They expect to finalize the CRA in the second half of 2024. A dedicated conference on the topic was held during the WP.6 third forum on 5 April (60 participants/30 women). A summary of the discussions is presented on the event webpage.²

C. Sectoral initiative on education on standardization

7. In February 2024 the sectoral initiative on education on standardization (START-ED) prepared an online survey in order to better plan the future work of the initiative. There have been around thirty respondents. The preliminary results of the survey were discussed at the annual meeting of the initiative on April 3, 2024 (20 participants/9 women).

III. Impact and implementation

8. The START initiatives have not yet turned their focus towards measuring impact and implementation of the guidance. This will be planned in the future. However, at this stage, there is still need to further disseminate the work, to finalize work in progress and to build upon certain relations with other international bodies.

A. Relation with other organizations' work

9. The SIEEE works in close cooperation with the IECEx. The relevant experts meet through the IECEx annual meeting, and the next meeting is planned to take place in Brazil on 23 September 2024. This group also hosted a dedicated meeting on 29 May 2024 on hydrogen.

10. The SIPS works closely with the ECE Sustainable Energy Division, Hydrogen Task Force (HTF) on the CRA for trunk pipeline safety in relation to hydrogen. SIPS participated in the HTF meetings of 12 October 2023 and 22 March 2024; the members of the HTF are interested in collaborating in the development of the CRA.

IV. Pertinence of the topic today

11. Cybersecurity aspects of products with digital technologies and technological services will become increasingly important in the coming years. Both of these aspects require a certain level of cyber awareness to plan against potential threats. The trend is that this will become more and more prevalent.

12. On goods that are traded via trunk pipeline, the market on hydrogen is growing and many countries, especially in developing and transitional economies, will require regulations on its exploitation. International regulatory cooperation and a relevant CRA on this topic will be key in order to ensure that the market is not fragmented by unharmonized regulations.

V. Future directions

13. The START plans to finalize the project on the CRA for trunk pipeline safety in relation to hydrogen during the next period as well as consider other areas that could benefit from a CRA. It will also plan to reactivate the sectoral initiative on cybersecurity and consider

² See: <https://unece.org/info/Trade/WP.6-Meetings/events/387890>

the associated CRA for an update as well as further example on the topic. The START also plans further work on AI related to product/service conformity.

14. The START-Ed proposes to develop further model modules, perhaps on a topic related to sustainability. It also suggests exploring further e-learning and its promotion.

Annex

Questionnaire on product conformity for trunk pipeline safety in relation to hydrogen

1. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) is working to develop a model for the harmonization of conformity assessment procedures and approaches in relation to products used in the transportation and production of hydrogen. This is based on the ECE Recommendation L on International Model for Transnational Regulatory Cooperation Based on Good Regulatory Practice and its model common regulatory arrangement (CRA).
2. This survey aims to identify current practices and plan future practices related to the transportation and production of hydrogen. This information will be used to develop a CRA. It is organized in five parts which reflects the five sections of a CRA.
3. Please respond to the parts of the questionnaire which you can inform and return to: regulatory.cooperation@un.org. The first round of consultation will be from May until September 2024. Future consultations may be planned, depending on the results. Thank you for your assistance and taking the time to respond.

A. Questionnaire

4. The survey questions are:
 1. Scope
 - 1.1 What state body authorizes the operation of pipelines including hydrogen or hydrogen gas-mixtures?
 - 1.2 What state body (national or local) is authorized to issue permission for pipeline construction?
 - 1.3 What state body (national or local) is authorized to issue permission for pipeline operation?
 - 1.4 What documents regulate inspection, maintenance and repair issues of pipelines and equipment safety for hydrogen (international standards, national standards, laws, etc.)?
 - 1.5 What are the arrangements in place to ensure the safe operation of pipelines for hydrogen between regulators and operators?
 2. Product requirements (equipment, services, materials for pipeline systems)
 - 2.1 What national directives/regulations set requirements for the provision of safety of pipeline systems for hydrogen or hydrogen gas-mixtures?
 - 2.2 What rules or standards set requirements to pipeline safety for hydrogen or hydrogen gas-mixtures?
 - 2.3 What safety criteria (ecological, technical, social, etc.) for pipeline safety for hydrogen are considered substantial for your national legislation? Are these linked with concerns of specific locations (mountain, polar regions, shelf region, etc.)?
 - 2.4 What additional laws, regulations contain provisions regulating processes of designing and construction of pipelines for hydrogen?
 - 2.5 What provisions are planned or additionally in place for mixture of hydrogen with other gases?
 3. Reference to standards clauses

3.1 Are the requirements of national standards for the design, construction and operation of pipelines for hydrogen mandatory for compliance of alternative requirement may be applied (that of international standards, regional standards, etc.)? (please list those that apply with a brief description of their scope)

3.2 What standards have been adopted to regulate the design, construction and operation of pipelines for hydrogen? (please list those that apply with a brief description of their scope)

4. Compliance clause

4.1 Are there mandatory conformity assessment procedures in place for the design, construction and operation of pipelines for hydrogen? (please list those that apply with a brief description of their scope)

4.2 Are there voluntary conformity assessment systems in place for the design, construction and operation of pipelines for hydrogen that are recognized by national state authorities?

4.3 What role do national, regional and/or international standards have in conformity assessment procedures of pipelines and equipment for hydrogen? (are these mandatory or voluntary) (are these referenced in national laws and regulations) (please list those that apply with a brief description of their scope)

4.4 Are the results of foreign conformity assessment accepted in your country in relation to pipelines and equipment for hydrogen? (for which stages: design, construction, operation)

5. Market surveillance clause

5.1 Are there procedures in place to remove authorizations for the operation of pipelines for hydrogen if these are deemed unsafe? (if yes, please describe)

5.2 Are local inspector (under the umbrella of laws) involved in the surveillance of the safe use of plants, factories, etc.?
