

Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6)
Team of Specialists on Gender-Responsive Standards teleconference discussion notes and actions
11 September 2024, 12:00 CET

Item	Subject	Discussion / Action
1a	Approval of the agenda	Agenda agreed with no modifications
1b	Roll call	<p>Leadership: <u>Michelle Parkouda</u> (Chair, SCC Canada), <u>Stephanie Eynon</u> (Vice-Chair, BSI UK), <u>Lucy Salt</u> (Worksafe NZ)</p> <p>Secretariat: Lance Thompson (UNECE)</p> <p>Members: <u>Adriana Martins</u> (CEN/CENELEC), <u>Analia Purita</u> (IRAM Argentina), <u>Basma M’Lahfi</u> (IMANOR Morocco), <u>Caitlin Kraft Buchman</u> (Women@TheTable), <u>Davit Tkemaladze</u> (GeoSTM Georgia), <u>Fernanda de Castro Boria</u> (SCC Canada), <u>Fiona O’Donovan</u> (NSAI Ireland), <u>Grace Bolan</u> (ASME, USA), <u>Ian Gardner</u> (IEC), <u>Joanna Gajdek</u> (ASI Austria), <u>Kaspars Milasevics</u> (LVS Latvia), <u>Katie Kermaani</u> (ASME USA), <u>Nadia Aslan</u> (SMIIC), <u>Nazia Habib</u> (UK), <u>Paola Travaini</u> (UNI Italy), <u>Sari Winasis Basuki</u> (DIN Germany), <u>Sarid Sriduandao</u> (TISI Thailand), <u>Sevde Özbey</u> (SMIIC), <u>Victoria Mletzak</u> (ILNAS LU).</p> <p>Observers: <u>Angela Wekesa</u> (KEBS Kenya), <u>Arianna Dilauro</u>, <u>Athina Panayiotou</u> (CYS Cyprus), <u>Meredith Shaddix</u> (ANSI US), <u>Leonhard den Hertog</u> (DG JUST EC), <u>Oisín Curtis</u>, <u>Sazi Zangqa</u></p> <p>30 participants (23 were women)</p>
2	Invited Speaker	<p>Mr. Leonhard den Hertog, Policy Officer at the European Commission Director-General for Justice and Consumers (DG-JUST), Unit D3 – Gender Equality provided an overview of the Commission directive on gender balance in decision-making.</p> <p>He presented the European Commission Gender Equality strategy which has multiple dimensions including free from violence and stereotypes; thriving in a gender-equal economy; and, leading equally throughout society. He concentrated specifically on the gender balance on company boards directive. Current data shows that the majority of Member States in the European Union are not achieving a gender balance; the 27 Member-State-average is 33,8 per cent and some lower than ten per cent. This directive was proposed by the Commission in 2012 and was negotiated over ten years; it should be transposed into national legislation by December 2024 with deadlines for companies to reach targets by 2026. The main principles include targets that companies should achieve; these are similar to quotas, but there are no sanction in case they are not achieved. If the target of 40 per cent non-executive board representativity and 33 per cent for all directors are not met within large listed companies, there is a requirement to adjust the processes for selecting candidates as well as robust transparency reporting that will be necessary. The burden of proof will be on company to demonstrate that the Directive is not breached (instead of on the candidate who was not appointed/elected). Companies will need to report to the competent Member State authority on an annual basis. There does exist a suspension clause which allows Member States to continue applying their national measures which are equally effective.</p> <p>A question was raised on the integration of criteria beyond gender in this directive, if this had been considered. The current Directive was initiated in 2012 and that was not included at that time; there are provisions that Member States could consider nationally. The EC is moving in this direction and had this legislation been proposed today, it most likely would not have taken the same amount of time to get approval.</p>

		<p>A question was raised on the reporting obligations (as companies need to report for other purposes) as well as how this Directive might be used in public procurement. The Directive foresees that the reporting could be grouped with other reporting. The provision linking this Directive to public procurement is not yet in force, though there are some national initiatives.</p> <p>A question was raised if there might be accompaniment or guidance for companies that have difficulty to comply (perhaps because they are in a male-dominated industry). There have been some funding programmes targeting education but there is no guidance beyond this. Ideally, girls would be encouraged to join male-dominated industries to, in the long term, balance the representativity.</p> <p>A question was raised on the evaluation procedures and penalties applied if companies are non-compliant. The Member States will need to take those actions. The Commission organises workshops with the Member States and may issue documents to guide the implementation of the directive. There already exists other EU law and guidance on equality and non-discrimination in general that could be applied to company boards.</p> <p>A comment was raised that this framework would be excellent to reference within the work of the GRS to demonstrate the need for gender-responsive standards and that there is existing legislation on this level of gender equality.</p> <p>A further comment was raised praising the burden of proof aspect which also reflects the analysis proposed in the <i>Guidelines on Developing Gender-Responsive Standards</i> that technical committees need to prove that there are no differences in results for men and women (rather than others having to prove that there are differences).</p>
3	Update of WP6 34 th Session	<p>The Chair assisted by the secretariat provided a brief update from the WP.6 34th Annual Session which took place 26-28 August 2024 in Geneva. She underlined the efforts within WP.6 to capture and disseminate sex disaggregated data; she noted that there are perhaps some efforts to be made in other subgroups, but also for the ToS-GRS to make some efforts to attract some more men to participate.</p> <p>The GRS segment of the agenda concentrated on the implementation of gender action plans (GAPs) with presentations from ISO and UNE (Spain). There were also presentations of the future XB project (see agenda item 5 below) with further presentations on the gender-related work done by GeoSTM (Georgia) and DPS (Albania). An overview of the current submissions to the GAP questionnaire was also presented (see agenda item 4 below). PTB (Germany) also provided an overview of the work they are doing in relation to gender. UN-Women also provided a presentation of the Beijing +30 review which will be taking place over the next few months. The latter will be subject of a regional event on 21-22 October 2024.</p> <p>There was also a panel conference on the green, digital transformation with examples of capacity building work to support this transformation.</p> <p>The Programme of Work for 2025 was approved, including the elements related to the future work of ToS-GRS in 2025 (see agenda item 6 below).</p>
4	Guide on GRS related GAP	<p>The Chair presented the document ECE/CTCS/WP.6/2024/7 which analyses the current responses to the GAP questionnaire (as well as the short responses received during the summer 2024) and compares these to the annex of Recommendation U and the UN/CEFACT Trade Facilitation Roadmap. The analysis shows that most activities in GAP today are related to gender balance and to a lesser degree to cooperation with other organizations and to collecting sex-disaggregated data. It demonstrates that there are a majority of activities from the annex of Rec.U which are not taken up by any (or very few) national standards bodies.</p> <p>One of the activities planned in the Programme of Work is to develop a model best practice for GRS-related GAP. The question was raised if the ToS-GRS want the secretariat to further develop the analysis of document 2024/7 into a model with some examples form</p>

		<p>respondents to the questionnaire (and integrating aspects of the Roadmap). Or if they suggest a different approach.</p> <p>A few comments were raised that the main objective of a GAP should be on actually developing gender-responsive standards. The emphasis on women participation gives the false impression that this is a women's issue where in fact it is everyone's responsibility. We should perhaps try to stress that the objective should be to make gender-responsive standards. It could be good to have returns on experience from standards bodies on this specific point: what actions are they taking? are they receiving push-back? It was suggested to survey signatories on the actions they have taken concerning gender-responsive standards development.</p> <p>It was reminded that capturing sex-disaggregated data and ensuring gender-balanced meetings are important elements and may, for some bodies, be low hanging fruit which will be easier to achieve and help to present progress. It would further be interesting to see the evolution of participation as more and more data becomes available.</p> <p>⇒ It was agreed that we continue to work towards a GAP guidelines which perhaps puts a stronger emphasis on gender-responsive standards themselves. An email will be circulated to ToS-GRS participants to provide information about on what they would want to see in such a guide and to ask if there are any volunteers to lead such a work as a project within WP.6. If there are no volunteers, the Secretary will consolidate the information and make a proposal to the GRS leadership.</p>
5	XB project	<p>The secretariat updated the team on the extra-budgetary project which should be launched in the coming months on mainstreaming gender throughout the quality infrastructure with capacity building in Albania, Benin and Georgia. This will start with launch events in each of the three capitals (hopefully in November / December) and a local consultant hired in each of the three countries to roll out the deliverables and accompany the bodies involved in the project. The secretariat will plan to provide regular updates on this work.</p>
6	Plan for next 12 months	<p>The Chair reminded the main topics planned in the Programme of Work for 2025:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance implementation of Rec. U and signatories of Dec. • Develop model best practice for GAP (item 4 above) • Enhance research on gender mainstreaming throughout QI (item 5 above) • Exchanges of experience • Further areas where GRS could add guidance <p>On the exchanges of experience, the Chair asked that any volunteers who wanted to share their best practices at a future meeting make themselves known by email to the Secretary.</p> <p>On the regular meetings of the team, the Chair proposes to continue with the format of invited speakers and asked if there were any suggestions for future speakers. There was one suggestion to approach UNCTAD on the work they have recently completed on women and electronic commerce.</p> <p>There was another suggestion to propose a theme on artificial intelligence and gender equality. It was stressed that AI can only truly bring benefits if it is inclusive and developed with a clear intention of being gender-responsive. It was further emphasized that standards will be a cornerstone of AI governance in the future, so we need to ensure that these are gender-responsive. National standards development bodies will there have a large role to play to ensure that AI is as thoughtful as possible.</p>
7	Update from secretariat	<p>There have been no new signatories to the Declaration since the last meeting. We are still at 86 signatories.</p> <p>There had been a request within GRS to reorganize the GRS section of the website. The secretariat explained that there are constraints inherited from the UNECE overall structure which is reflected in the current pages (we can do drop down menus on a page, we can create sub-pages (within limits), we can hyperlink to other sources (but we need to be</p>

	<p>careful as these links sometimes break) – the pages on UNECE should reflect the work of UNECE (and the ToS-GRS), so we should not abuse links to other sources...)</p> <p>The secretariat asked how the experts would like to see the website reorganized, what type of information they would like to be able to find more easily, etc. in order to prioritize according to the expectations of the users.</p> <p>It was requested to dispose of a repository of all presentations with the name of the presenter, their organization, the date and at least a brief title which sums up the content (or a brief summary). Such a repository of all the presentations over the past three years would be helpful.</p> <p>It was further requested that the list of GRS meetings is good, but it would be helpful if we could see the main topics discussed on each meeting so that it is easier to find relevant meetings.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Bureau would review the website to identify if and when content should be removed.</p> <p>The secretariat reconfirmed that it is working on the publication of the GRS Glossary. There is some text in Russian and French which needs to be verified; then it will be submitted for internal approvals.</p> <p>The secretariat announced that it is still working on the submission of the code lists to the UN/CEFACT EDIFACT team; the procedures have taken a bit more time than expected, but this is progressing.</p> <p>The secretariat informed the experts that the report and programme of work (and ToS-GRS mandate) were all cleared by the 9th annual Steering Committee at their meeting on 26-28 June 2024. There was a presentation from Caitlan Kraft Buchman at this meeting. The Steering Committee then presented at the 135th Executive Committee meeting on 10 September 2024, but given time constraints and priorities, the GRS work was not showcased at the Executive Committee meeting.</p>
	<p><u>Next ToS-GRS meetings</u>: 6 Nov. 2024 (12:00-14:00 Geneva-time)</p> <p>The WP.6 Forum will be planned in March-April 2025, perhaps in Berlin; to be confirmed by mid-October.</p>