

ETUC standardisation newsletter - May 2020

Dear colleagues and friends,

The ETUC is pleased to send you its newsletter on standardisation that will keep you regularly updated on the ETUC's activities in the field of standardisation. It will deliver information on European and international standardisation direct to your desktop. If you wish additional information and/or documents related to the news mentioned below, feel free to contact us at standards@etuc.org.

Trade Unions tackling COVID-19 virus across Europe



Workers are at the forefront of the battle against Covid-19 pandemic, and millions of workers are experiencing many difficulties in their lives and in making a living caused by measures to tackle the pandemic. National trade

unions across Europe are working hard to reach agreements with employers and with governments to deal with the serious social and economic impacts on workers and enterprises. They manage to put in place measures and resources to keep workers safe, to protect their jobs and incomes during the covid-19, independently of their job, occupation or employment relationship.

The ETUC publishes and regularly updates a series of 'COVID-19 Watch' briefing notes. These briefing notes are produced with the support of the ETUI and ETUC affiliated organisations. They focus on developments providing critical information on the impacts of COVID-19 on labour markets, workers and citizens across Europe on the following issues:

- Short Time Work Measures Across Europe
- National measures to support households by providing different (tax) relief measures
- National measures to avoid collective/individual lay-offs (incl. granting (additional/special) leaves)
- Sick pay and social protection-related interventions: extraordinary measures to protect workers in times of Covid19
- National measures to protect non-standard workers including workers in the platform economy
- National measures to protect self-employed workers
- Workers' Information Consultation and Participation
- Frontier workers
- Human Rights and COVID-19
- Trade Union Rights and COVID-19
- Occupational safety and health
- Social Dialogue Developments
- Return to the workplace measures
- Seasonal workers

More information on Trade Unions tackling Coronavirus across Europe available [here](#).

The ETUC contributed in shaping a new European Standard on the "procurement of services" (EN 17371-1)



Since 2016, ETUC has contributed to shape the new European standard which establishes the guidelines for “the assessment of the capacity of service providers and the evaluation of service proposals”, in the framework of procurement.

ETUC’s main objective was to improve working conditions in the supply chain and to include references to collective bargaining and social rights in the standard. Although ETUC was not very fond of this standard, without the ETUC contributions, various important clauses wouldn’t have been included. In particular, the standard now addresses issues such as:

- The provision for an up-to-date certificate on social security contributions for employees and self-employed persons,
- human resources, focusing on both quality and quantity of personnel, posted workers and subcontractors,
- the possible submission of a document on the policy of collective agreements at the place of work,
- the violation of the International Labour Organization’s fundamental labour rights”,
- etc.

The new European standard also refers to ISO 26000 on “Social responsibility” and contains an annex – developed by the ETUC – which lists accessibility and sustainability criteria to evaluate “best value” in private procurement.

Ornella Cilona, from the Italian trade union CGIL and appointed ETUC expert in

the Working Group responsible for writing the standard, stated: *“We are very happy to see this European standard coming forward. This standard is an appropriate policy tool for addressing the wellbeing of workers in the field of service procurement. And it duly complements the European procurement regulations”.*

European standard on patient involvement in care approved



The European standard EN 17398 on ‘Patient involvement in healthcare - Minimum requirements for person-centred care’ was adopted in April 2020 and will soon be published. The ETUC STAND has participated in the development of this standard, which addresses the involvement of the patient in healthcare services through mainly patient empowerment, and the development of a partnership between the patient and its relatives with healthcare professionals. The new standard will be a helpful document to start routines for improved patient-involvement in healthcare.

The ETUC STAND expert – Eva Nilsson (LO-Sweden) notes that *“through the ETUC active involvement, it ensured that the standard clearly addressed the need to foresee routines and time for healthcare professionals to dedicate work for person-centred care. We also succeeded in including in the standard the ‘education and continuous training in patient involvement, as part of the training of care personnel and other staff members’.”*

The ETUC STANDardisation joins the CEN-CENELEC focus Group on Artificial Intelligence



At the beginning of 2019, CEN and CENELEC Technical Boards created the Focus Group on Artificial Intelligence (AI) to mirror the standardisation activities at international level and to identify potential specific European requirements. The Focus Group acts as an interface with the European Commission and as a forum to discuss European AI policy and how it translates in terms of AI standardisation.

As the ETUC is joining the ongoing European commission consultation on AI, and noting that standards may be used to underpin any legal instrument(s) to be adopted, the ETUC STAND project has also joined the CEN-CENELEC Focus Group to follow the discussions and to monitor any new standard setting activity related to AI that could potentially be relevant for trade unions.

International Workshop Agreement on "Humane Entrepreneurship" not pursued by ISO



In February 2020, SAC (China), JISC (Japan), and KATS (Republic of Korea) submitted a proposal to elaborate an ISO International Workshop Agreement (IWA) on **Guidelines for Humane Entrepreneurship**. The ETUC STAND questioned the usefulness of this new standardisation work, which raised in the ETUC opinion many concerns for trade unions (see [March Newsletter](#)). The ETUC STAND therefore launched a lobbying campaign, inviting their affiliates to vote against the proposal.

In April, the ISO/Central Secretariat informed us that the proposal to elaborate a new International Workshop Agreement on “Humane Entrepreneurship”, was **not accepted**. This shows that ETUC and its affiliates unions can in fact influence the decision-making process in the standardisation system both at European and international level, if we act timely and work in coordination.

ISO is proposing to set up a new Technical Committee on "Social Responsibility"



ISO has recently launched a proposal to create a new Technical Committee on “Social responsibility”, which is out for voting at national level until the beginning of July.

This proposal sets forward the development of a new set of standards addressing the implementation of specific social responsibility issues. It also aims to revise/upgrade ISO 26000 on “Social responsibility”.

The current version of ISO 26000 was published over 10 years ago, and its elaboration entailed a unique process in ISO, in the sense that it used a specific procedure for its adoption. It allowed many (under-represented) stakeholders to have a direct input in the ISO elaboration and adoption processes. This resulted into an ISO 26000 standard on social responsibility, which trade unions overall considered as “good”.

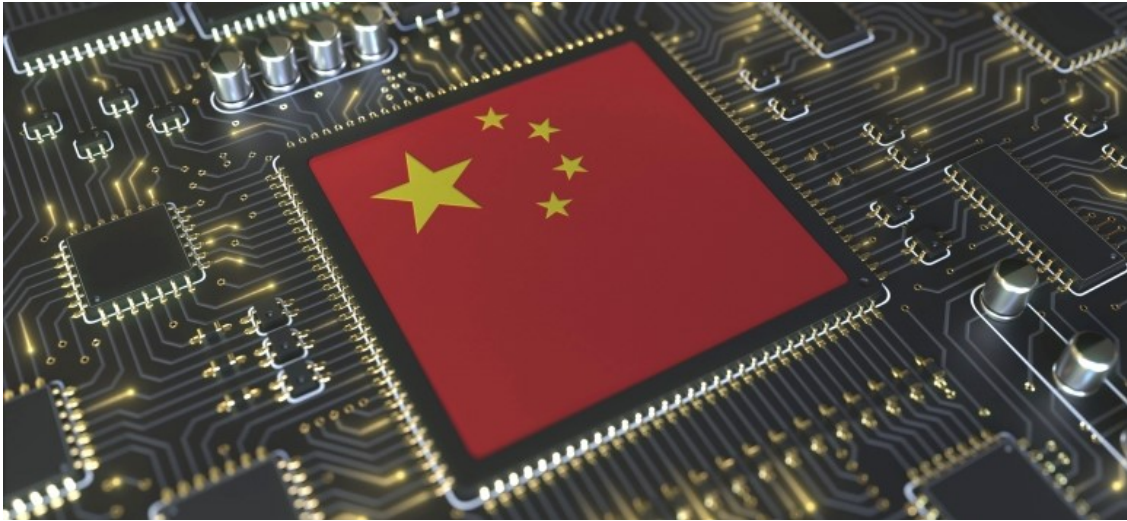
The risk of having the standard revised or updated as proposed, is that the ISO may not carry out again this unique adoption procedure, allowing the direct participation of interested stakeholders like trade unions, as it did 10 years ago. This does not bring the necessary confidence to support a potential revision/upgrade of ISO 26000.

In addition, the United Nations’ International Labour Office (ILO), provided substantial input in the original ISO 26000. Chapters like those on Human Rights and Labour practises, are based on the ILO conventions and recommendations. But in 2017, the ILO and ISO cooperation agreement was terminated, making future ILO-ISO collaboration as good as impossible (a renewed dialogue between ISO and ILO is highly recommended).

Several stakeholders therefore question if ISO, which decision-making processes have their roots in technical standard settings, is an appropriate body to develop social standards.

To conclude, there are many elements that need considering before setting up a new ISO Technical Body on “Social responsibility”. The ETUC will closely examine the proposal and coordinate any necessary action among its affiliates.

Geopolitics and Technical standardisation: China's rising interest in international standard setting activities



For decades and almost unnoticed by the general public and politicians, technical standards have been a driving engine behind globalisation. Technical standard setting is – even though often very underrated – one dimension of the EU's strategy to shape globalisation. Until now, a common practice used by the EU Member States has been to push forward the implementation of European standards, internationally, through their engagement in, for example, the International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC).

In recent years, international technical standards run the risk of turning into a core subject of “great power competition”, from emerging technological fields such as 5G (Huawei versus US authorities), Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT) and smart cities to traditional sectors including energy, health care, railways and agriculture. And increasingly, as side effect, social/societal/OSH issues are popping up in standards.

China takes an essentially state-driven approach, with the potential to fundamentally reshape the future order of international technical standardisation. In addition, China has incorporated a standardisation dimension into its Belt and Road Initiative. This could contribute to a trend that weakens the existing international technical standardisation institutions. In this context, Europe is facing several challenges.

Against this background, the [Heinrich Böll Foundation - Brussels](#), has

commissioned the study [“Technical standardisation, China and the future international order. A European perspective”](#) by Dr Tim Rühlig. The study analyses two main questions: what are the ongoing processes of politicisation and transformation of international technical standardisation from a European perspective? What are the differences between the European and the Chinese standardisation systems? It concludes with concrete recommendations for European policy makers.

CEN and ISO measures for COVID-19: only virtual meetings take place



Elaborating the content of standards mostly take place during face-to-face meetings, with over thousands of meetings organised, every year, in Europe and beyond. About 275 face-to-face international ISO meetings were scheduled from February to July 2020.

CEN and ISO have decided that, at least until 30th June 2020 and 31st July 2020 respectively, all their meetings will only take place virtually.

This will certainly disrupt the standard setting activities and further impact the decision-making process. Delays are to be anticipated but it is expected that –

progressively – standardisation activities will gear up again after the summer break.

Copyright © ETUC STAND. All rights reserved.

Our website is: <http://standardisation.etuc.org>

Our mailing address is: standards@etuc.org

Follow us on Twitter [@ETUC_standards](#)

To subscribe to our newsletter, click [here](#)

The ETUC STAND project is financially supported by the European Commission and EFTA



This email was sent to gdejongh@etuc.org
[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)
ETUC · Bld du Roi Albert II, 5 · B - 1210 Brussels · Brussels 1000 · Belgium

