

ETUC Standardisation Newsletter - June 2024

Dear colleagues and friends,

The ETUC is pleased to share with you its newsletter on standardisation, bringing you regular updates on the ETUC's activities in this field. We are pleased to deliver information on European and international standardisation straight to your inbox. If you wish to receive additional information and/or documents related to the news presented below, feel free to contact us at standards@etuc.org.

ETUC Speaks at EUROSHNET Conference in Krakow



The ETUC participated in the [EUROSHNET Conference 'World in transition – Europe in adaptation – OHS under pressure'](#), on 13-14 June 2024, in Krakow, Poland.

EUROSHNET is an international network of occupational safety and health (OSH) experts involved in standardisation, testing and certification. The network is intended to facilitate contact between OSH experts, to promote the discussion of issues of common interest, and to disseminate information relevant to occupational safety and health.

Claes-Mikael Ståhl, ETUC Deputy General Secretary, spoke at the panel 'Current and future challenges in standardisation, testing and certification'. He raised: "Standardisation needs trade unions at the table to be a helpful tool supporting a high level of health and safety. But we need to give unions the means to participate. [Trade unions are pragmatic](#) and can provide a lot of know-how. Yet our resources for following the broad range of technical standards are vastly inadequate in comparison with those underpinned by the profit motive of corporate engagement."

The next EUROSHNET Conference will be held in Helsinki in 2026.

Please Take Your Seat in the Revision of EN ISO 45001



The International Standardisation Organisation, ISO, is revising the European and international standard [EN ISO 45001 'Occupational health and safety management systems - Requirements with guidance for use'](#).

In Spring, a new Working Group (WG) 6 was set up in ISO/TC 283 'OHS management', which will be tasked with the revision.

At national level, ISO/TC 283 has limited the number of experts that can attend WG 6 meetings, to three delegates per National Standards Body. This is to allow wide participation in the WG, while ensuring balanced representation in meetings.

ISO/TC 283 leadership is specifically encouraging National Standards Bodies to consider nominating delegates from across the three relevant stakeholder groups: labour, employers and regulators/neutral.

The ETUC has long called for an equal footing and appreciates this decision was taken to “hold a seat” for unions. We are now encouraging national unions to use this unique opportunity to participate in the revision of ISO 45001 at national level. The ETUC is striving for [more inclusiveness and the removal of barriers for union participation in standardization](#).

ETUC and USO Awareness Event “Standardisation – It is also Important for Unions”



Twice a year, the ETUC organises national workshops in cooperation with national affiliates, in order to increase awareness within the trade union

movement about the world of standards, their influence at the workplace, and their development process.

On 22 May, together with USO, we organised a national workshop in Spain. The event gathered around 50 participants and was kindly hosted in the premises of UNE, the Spanish Association for Standardisation.

Speakers contributed by sharing insights into what standardisation is, why it is important for trade unions, and how it works at both EU and national level. Participants further learnt about the role in this field of the European Commission and of the Spanish Standardisation Body (UNE). Practical case studies were also shared with participants, with a focus on standardisation in relation to artificial intelligence and the quality of air in plane cabins.

An important message shared during the meeting is that, while the ETUC opposes new standardisation activities that may cover workers' matters – as these should be addressed through legislation and collective bargaining – we follow a constructive approach on standardisation work that can have an impact on the daily lives of workers.

For more information, please do not hesitate to contact us: standards@etuc.org.

National Deep Dive Session on Standardisation



On 16 May, the ETUC was invited to speak at a [deep dive session](#), organised by [Civic Coding](#) in collaboration with the Centre for Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (ZVKI). This was part of a series of events titled “AI Act and Standardization”, that aim to empower and enable civil society in Germany to engage in national and European standardisation, especially in the context of standards supporting the AI Act.

During the event, we outlined the role standards are meant to play in the implementation of the AI Act in Europe, and stressed the need for our engagement as trade unions. Considering the ubiquity of technologies used in practically all of managerial functions, from recruitment, day-to-day decision making, allocation of tasks, surveillance, performance evaluation, and termination, the use of AI at the workplace significantly raises the number of risks for workers. While legislation and collective bargaining are the first and foremost legitimate avenues to address work related aspects, standards will play an important role in the implementation of the AI legislation. It is therefore essential for trade unions to be represented in standardisation, in order to bring in workers’ concerns and priorities.

We further provided information on technical work taking place in Europe, and gave an overview of ETUC participation in the development of standards which are mandated by the European Commission, and that operationalise the legal requirements of the AI Act.

The ETUC at the 2024 CPDP Conference



The ETUC was invited to participate in a panel discussion on ‘[New Governance and Inclusiveness in AI Standardisation – How far have we gone?](#)’, on 23 May 2024. The panel was organised by ANEC, the European consumer voice in standardisation, and brought together trade unions, SMEs, and the European Commission (DG CNCT) to look at the importance of having a wide range of stakeholders engaged in AI standardisation, the measures put in place for their increased participation and the potential impact in AI governance.

The ETUC stressed that if European standardisation is to effectively deliver for all and live up to European policy ambitions, it is essential to ensure the participation of trade unions as relevant stakeholders, especially in standards to support policy and product safety legislation. We further stressed that standardisation remains a market driven and private led activity, where participation is largely dominated by private stakeholders who have a financial interest in developing standards. Not ensuring wide representation of stakeholders, including trade unions, means leaving the responsibility of protecting the safety and fundamental rights of workers in the hands of private actors, which is not acceptable.

We further informed the audience that as part of efforts to facilitate the participation of relevant stakeholders, the ETUC has helped set up a dedicated Task Group on inclusiveness within the European technical committee developing the standards for AI (CEN-CENELEC JTC 21). The objectives of this group are to assess the engagement of stakeholders in the development of different deliverables, and to reflect on ways to increase their participation. One of the concrete means put in place by the TG has been to share updated information on AI standardisation and related activities to all interested stakeholders, via the publication of a newsletter, now publicly available on our [ETUC website](#).

ETUC at the Plenary of ISO/TC 37/SC 5 “Translation, Interpreting and Related Technology”



The International Standardisation Organisation (ISO) is developing standards on translation and interpreting. Technical Sub-Committee ISO/TC 37/SC 5 is responsible for such work. On 7 June, we attended its latest plenary meeting in Brussels.

Activities in ISO/TC 37/SC 5 are carried out through the support of 5 working groups (WGs). The ETUC follows the work of two such groups. WG 2, currently focused on the revision of ISO 18841, which sets out general requirements and recommendations for the provision of interpreting services. And WG 3, defining the criteria for facilities and equipment used in the provision of interpreting services.

The work of both working groups is crucial for interpreters, whose daily lives can be impacted by the criteria defined in the resulting standards.

Our main objective is that both standards lead to meaningful criteria, that can promote good working conditions and optimally support interpreters in their work; and that view interpreters as one of multiple parties – all responsible for successful interpreting outcomes – involved in interpreting activities and contracts. This is crucial to avoid standards that list a series of imposing requirements on workers.

The ETUC will continue monitoring the work of WG 2 and WG 3, advocating for standards that safeguard the rights and working conditions of interpreters across Europe and beyond.

On the Road to Making Scaffolding Safer



Scaffolds are widely used in construction sites to support workers in the building but also in the maintenance and repair of houses and other structures. Though, scaffolding is hard work and involves many safety risks.

The [European Federation of Building and Wood Workers, EFBWW, has therefore carried out an EU-funded project](#) focusing on working conditions and occupational health and safety, vocational training and safety training, technical developments and standardisation as well as social dialogue in scaffolding. The research in this sector builds on the reports of six countries, explaining the actual situation of scaffolding work.

At the final project conference, which took place on 4 June in Brussels, draft policy recommendations were presented. These recommendations are aimed at the various levels of action that have an influence on work in the scaffolding industry, namely the European and national levels, the national sectoral level, as well as the company level.

The discussions clarified that non-technical requirements should not be the subject of standardisation. This means that matters such as training, working conditions or safety measures should be regulated in European or national legislation. The current European standards for scaffolding are not harmonised standards, so they do not underpin the Work Equipment Directive and their application does not give rise to an automatic presumption of conformity with this Directive.

Reporting Machinery Accidents



Many workers across several sectors, such as industrial production and construction work, work with machines. According to [Eurostat](#), in 2021, more than one-quarter (25.7 %) of fatal accidents at work in the EU resulted from losing control of a machine, tool or transport/handling equipment. To ensure machines in the European market are safe, for the first time, the new EU Machinery Regulation (EU 2023/2016) foresees a list of machines considered as posing a higher risk to its users. It currently lists six machine categories. The list is not fixed and will be updated in the coming years. For this, Member States need to report accidents involving machinery.

The [European Commission has prepared a draft template for the collection of data on accidents involving machinery or related products](#), and launched a consultation in May. The template aims to oblige Member States to report accidents involving machinery. With the data collected, the EC will assess the need to update the high-risk machinery list in the regulation. This is a significant aspect for ETUC, as we want to ensure these dangerous machines are subject to third-party conformity assessments to prevent workplace accidents.

The [ETUC responded](#) to the public consultation of the European Commission on the collection of data on accidents with machinery or related products. We welcome that the draft template does not only include the collection of data on accidents, but also linked to other sources related to health and safety when

working with machines. As the data collection will form the basis for decision on the amendment of the list, a good methodology and assessment of the individual categories is fundamental. The template itself is suitable as a first proposal for discussion but needs further explanations. Furthermore, the ETUC would like to call for caution and advise against changing the list on the basis of quantitative data only.

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