

## ETUC standardisation newsletter - September 2021

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](mailto:standards@etuc.org).

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### CEN-CENELEC webinar on harmonised standards under the Machinery Directive



CEN and CENELEC are organising on 18 October a webinar on the preparation of “harmonised standards” under the Machinery Directive.

The Machinery Directive – currently [under revision](#) – is part of the so called “New Legislative Framework”, which makes intensive use of European standards (which references have been cited in the OJEU) to provide the presumption of conformity to legal safety requirements. As such, these harmonised standards are a cornerstone for the practical implementation of the Directive for the safety of machines.

For workers, it is crucial to ensure that the machines used at the workplace are safe and ergonomically friendly in order to prevent or minimise possible OSH risks. The harmonised standards supporting the Machinery Directive provide the technical details to define “safe” and “OSH-friendly” machines. The participation of trade unions during the preparation of these harmonised standards is therefore important. The CEN-CENELEC webinar will focus on the risk assessment, the specificities and verifiability of the standards, and other practical issues involved in the drafting of these standards.

For more information and to register for the event see: <https://bit.ly/3DGzhAr>

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## Reloaded: Occupational Health & Safety Management Standard



ISO 45001:2018 is an international standard for occupational health and safety management systems. It specifies requirements and gives guidance for its use to provide safe and healthy workplaces by preventing work-related injury and ill health. The standard can be seen as a series of minimum requirements which an

employer's management system must comply with to achieve certification.

The standard, first published in 2018, is under the technical responsibility of ISO/TC 283 'Occupational Health & Safety Management'. At its May meeting, ISO/TC 283 decided to launch a ballot on the possible earlier revision of ISO 45001. The ballot was open in July and closes in December 2021.

Interestingly, a survey from 2020 on the use of ISO 45001 indicated that clause 5.4 (Participation and consultation of workers) is difficult to understand and needs reformulation. From a trade union perspective this entails both: risks and opportunities.

The revision of ISO 45001 can be an opportunity to tackle shortcomings (e.g. provision of protective equipment at no cost for workers, etc.) but it could also be a potential threat to existing achievements (e.g. risk of downsizing requirements addressing workers and workers' representatives participation and consultation). The participation of trade unions to raise their voice during the revision is therefore of importance. Should you be interested in this work, please contact us ([kbehnke@etuc.org](mailto:kbehnke@etuc.org)) and your [National Standardisation Body](#).

Additionally, ISO TC/283 'Occupational Health & Safety Management' launched another user survey this summer to collect user views on ISO 45001. The outcome of the survey will be considered to determine how ISO will approach a possible revision of the standard. If you have any remarks or observations, please fill the survey at this link: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/TFN8IQ/>. The deadline is end November.

The ETUC published in 2018, following the publication of the standard, a [trade union guide on the implementation of ISO 45001](#) that provides background information about how to deal with ISO 45001, if it should get implemented in your company or organisation.

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## Whistleblowing standard goes to publication



The international draft standard ISO/FDIS 37002 '*Whistleblowing management systems - Guidelines*' was unanimously approved and will be published later this year. The standard provides guidelines for implementing, managing, evaluating, maintaining and improving a robust and effective management system within an organisation for whistleblowing.

Whistleblowing can save lives, the environment and money. It can play an essential role in bringing to light activities that are contrary to public interest, illegal activities, corruption and threats to public health and safety.

The ETUC has been [working on whistleblowing](#) for some time to ensure workers are protected from blacklisting when they blow the whistle. The ETUC therefore also participated in the development of this standard since the start. We welcome the standard includes almost all ETUC demands and will help organisations to implement a whistleblowing management system that is compliant to the EU Directive on Whistleblowing.

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## Internal investigations of organisations



The International Standardisation Organisation, ISO, adopted a proposal for a Technical Specification with guidance on internal investigations of organizations (ISO/NP TS 37008).

Internal investigations may be conducted in case of a suspected or actual instance of risk management failure, noncompliance or infringement (e.g. exposure to workplace safety and health hazards, irregularity, malpractices, misconduct, fraudulent activities, abuse of power, harassment or discrimination). The investigation should look at the facts and the events that have taken place, the risks the organization might face, and ways to address these risks.

The draft Technical Specification aims at providing guidelines to make better use of investigative resources (human, financial and other resources), to establish the policy and procedures to implement and conduct investigations, and to enhance the capacity of investigators. It also aims at helping with the reporting of the investigative results internally and externally, and effectively mitigate risk exposures.

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The collaboration agreement between European and international standardisation bodies is 30 years old



ISO, CEN, and the Austrian Standards International (A.S.I) are joining forces to organise a high-level event to take place on 11 October 2021. The event aims to explore the strategic importance of aligning regional standardisation with the international context and reflect on its future evolution. The event also marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vienna Agreement, which has facilitated the cooperation model between ISO and CEN.

To facilitate global trade, one of the prime objectives is to have identical European and international standards, in line with the primacy of international standards” principle. The **Vienna agreement** has allowed to work more efficiently and to reduce duplication and standards’ development times by working in parallel at international and European level.

Over these 30 years, the share of identical European and international standards has constantly grown. Today, in several economic sectors, over 60% of European standards are identical to international standards. This results in many standardisation activities taking place – in practise – solely at international level. This is causing concern to the ETUC, as shaping/influencing the content of international standards proves more challenging than that of European or regional standards. Moreover, we do not perceive that the ISO governance structures address “inclusiveness” in the same way as CEN.

The regulatory framework on standardisation has also evolved over the past 30 years. The European Standardisation System is now subject to [regulation 1025/2012/EC](#) and the International Standardisation System adheres to the [World Trade Organisation’s principles for the development of international standards](#).

More details on the event is available here: <https://bit.ly/3kQiUIW>

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ETUC contributes to the "EU Standardisation policy"



The European Commission invited citizens, Member States, federations and a wide range of stakeholders to contribute to the roadmap consultation for the forthcoming “Standardisation Strategy”. The deadline for feedback was the 9<sup>th</sup> of August. 138 contributions were submitted, including ETUC’s, and are publicly available [here](#).

The [ETUC contribution](#) to the Roadmap consultation focusses on six main points, such as the primacy of international standards, global leadership in standard-setting, removing barriers for trade unions’ national participation and harmonised versus non-harmonised standards.

It is expected that the European Commission will publish its “EU Standardisation Strategy” in the Autumn of 2021.

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ETUC comments on the draft 2022 Commission's Annual Union Work Programme on standardisation



On 18 May, the European Commission published its [2022 Annual Union Work Programme on standardisation](#). This annual work programme lists the European Commission's potential needs of European standards. Many of these proposals result, at later stage, in standardisation requests. The ETUC made specific comments on the standardisation needs in the field of Artificial Intelligence and on public procurement. For further details, contact [gdejongh@etuc.org](mailto:gdejongh@etuc.org) or [ngiorgi@etuc.org](mailto:ngiorgi@etuc.org).

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Permethrin in PPE for protection against tick bites: the more, the better - or not ?





People working in hunting, forestry or in some other capacity in forests, and employees of road maintenance services and the armed forces, are exposed to an

elevated risk of tick bites at work. One form of prevention for these groups of workers is the wearing of clothing with built-in protection against ticks. Clothing treated with permethrin is used in particular for this purpose.

Permethrin is an active biocidal agent used to protect against parasites, in particular against ticks. When clothing has been impregnated with permethrin during the manufacturing process, it serves as personal protective equipment (PPE) against ticks. The biocide is applied to the clothing by spray treatment, immersion in aqueous emulsions, polymer coating of the fibres during manufacture or micro and nano-encapsulation.

The active substance can however be released from the clothing on contact with the skin and absorbed through the latter. Prolonged body contact and external conditions such as humidity, temperature, perspiration and the material properties of the textiles can influence absorption. Permethrin is classified under CLP Regulation (EC) No 1272/2008 as a Category 1 skin sensitizer with hazard statement H317 ("May cause an allergic skin reaction"). In the EU, permethrin is considered non-carcinogenic based on the results of tests of active agents in accordance with the Biocide Regulation (EU) No 528/2012.

#### **Draft standard with controversial requirements**

In March 2020, the first draft standard on this subject was published: EN 17487, Protective clothing – Protective garments treated with permethrin for the protection against tick bites. The standard describes requirements and tests of clothing treated with permethrin for protection against tick bites (even after a defined number of washes under specified washing conditions). At the same time, the draft standard asserts that the clothing described in it is "harmless" to wearers.

According to the draft, the mean permethrin content of finished garments must not exceed 1,600 mg/m<sup>2</sup> of textile, with a maximum inhomogeneity of 20%. This would permit local concentrations of permethrin of over 1,900 mg/m<sup>2</sup>. Studies into the health protection of users of textiles treated with permethrin have generally been conducted at permethrin levels of 1,250 mg/m<sup>2</sup> of textile. According to the WHO recommendation, the recommended dosage for coats, jackets, long-sleeved shirts and trousers is 1,250 mg/m<sup>2</sup> and for short-sleeved shirts only 800 mg/m<sup>2</sup>. The value stated in the draft standard is thus significantly higher than the recommended concentrations.

Germany opposed the high permethrin value in the draft standard during the 2020 public enquiry. Firstly, no information is available on whether such a concentration is necessary (or is being promoted merely because of processes currently used by some manufacturers); secondly, it is unclear whether this concentration could in fact have harmful effects on workers who wear the clothing for longer periods. A second draft standard, which still includes the high value, is currently at the public enquiry stage.

The draft standard also addresses requirements for the protection of users. Reference is made here to the ADI (Accepted Daily Intake) value of the WHO. According to the draft, "it is expected that the 20 % ADI is not exceeded during common professional use of the garments when covering the lower and upper body (torso, arms and legs) during an 8-h working day. In case of longer use, for example for 24 h a day, at most 60 % of the ADI will be reached".

However, the means by which the permethrin is bound in the textile, which in turn is a consequence of the treatment method, is particularly relevant. Annex E of the current draft standard states that "if the permethrin is not firmly bound to the fabric, then the ADI for permethrin can be exceeded, especially when the starting concentration of permethrin is close to the maximal permethrin content in fabrics formulated in this document". Furthermore, the standards working group points out in clause E 10.4 that no standardised methods exist by which the health effects of permethrin could be reliably assessed.

The draft standard therefore leaves questions unanswered. In principle, there are advantages to standardising test methods for PPE treated with permethrin. It would be important for the impregnation methods also to be standardised and knowledge thereby gained of the extent to which they influence the release rate and thus the intake by humans under a range of conditions. Only then would risk assessment really be possible. Until this is achieved, the permissible mean concentration at impregnation should not exceed 1,250 mg/m<sup>2</sup>, consistent with the requirement for exposure to be kept to a minimum and owing to the limited scientific knowledge.

**Guest contribution by Dr Anja Vomberg ([vomberg@kan.de](mailto:vomberg@kan.de)) and Dr Michael Thierbach ([thierbach@kan.de](mailto:thierbach@kan.de)) of the German Commission for Occupational Health and Safety and Standardization (KAN)**

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