

ETUC standardisation newsletter - April 2023

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.

ETUC turns 50!



50 Years have passed since our Constituent Assembly and founding congress on 8-9 February 1973. During these 50 years, we have brought together the trade unions to fight for a more social Europe. The ETUC Congress is the highest decision-making body and determines the organisation's general policy and activity framework for the period ahead. It takes place every four years and is attended by delegates from national confederations and European trade union federations. It elects the members of the Executive Committee, the President, the General Secretary, the two Deputy General Secretaries and the four Confederal Secretaries. The next congress takes place from 23 to 26 May, in Berlin. The Congress also adopts the ETUC 2023-2027 Action programme, which

contains a chapter on standardisation and ETUC's approach towards the elaboration of standards, for the next four years.

ETUC says "NO" to international standard on forced labour



The severe exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain by means of human trafficking, forced labour, and modern slavery (HTFLMS) is sometimes referred to as “modern slavery”. Workers can become entrapped making clothes, serving food, picking crops, working in factories, or working in houses as cooks, cleaners or nannies. While it can appear to be a legitimate job, victims are often subjected to forms of control which prevent them from leaving or escaping exploitative conditions.

The International Organisation for Standardisation, ISO, is proposing to develop a new standard which will provide organisations with guidance for managing the risk of human trafficking, forced labour and modern slavery including prevention, identification, response, remediation, mitigation.

The ETUC believes ISO is not the right place to develop socio-political standards such as the now proposed guidelines. At the same time, we do not see the need for an ISO standard when the US already has legislation and the European Union is about to adopt its own. The European Union has proposed a regulation to ban the entry into the internal market of products made with forced labour. The ETUC is working to improve this legislative proposal and we hope that it will be an effective contribution to the elimination of such phenomena which according to the ILO is on the increase. According to the ILO, which prepared [guidelines to estimate forced labour of adults and children](#), 49.6 million people live in modern slavery – in forced labour and forced marriage – and roughly a quarter of all victims of modern slavery are children. Once the two biggest markets – US and EU together share 15,7% and 14,9% of the entire global GDP - have in place effective laws to prevent forced labour, there is little added value for a voluntary standard developed by businesses through private standardisation bodies. In the case of an ISO standard, membership-paying industry would write its own rules without democratic scrutiny and participation of other stakeholders. The ETUC opposes the ongoing ISO expansion from the elaboration of technical standards to social standards. The proposal is titled ISO/NP 37200 '*Guidance for the prevention, identification and response to human trafficking, forced labour, and modern slavery*'. It was proposed by the British Standardisation Body, BSI, and would be based on the [UK standard BS 25700 on modern slavery](#). ISO members can now vote until early June, on the proposal. The ETUC calls its affiliates to vote against.

**Performance of occupational Health & Safety
management Systems**



The International Organisation for Standardisation, ISO, is preparing an international standard on the performance evaluation of occupational health & safety management systems. The standard, titled ISO 45004 '*Occupational health and safety management — Guidelines on performance evaluation*' is developed by ISO/TC 283.

This document provides guidance on how to assess occupational health and safety (OH&S) performance, through the selection and use of performance evaluation processes and indicators, and by monitoring, measuring, analysing, and evaluating the data obtained. The standard supports ISO 45001:2018, which specifies requirements – not guidelines - for an occupational health and safety management system.

The ETUC calls to ensure that the main focus remains on the achievement of health and safety at the workplace rather than achieving certification. The consultation and participation of workers and their representatives in the performance evaluation is key. The involvement of workers is also supported by ISO 45001 and should also be reflected in ISO 45004. We further ask for guidance on the confidentiality, protection of privacy and sensitive information about workers throughout the performance evaluation process. Another issue we

raise is the precautionary protection and risk assessment to prevent accidents at work.

The standard is currently under commenting by the ISO members. Should you have any feedback, please send your comments the latest by Wednesday, 3 May to kbehnke@etuc.org.

Climate change brings new risks for workers



Climate change poses new risks for occupational safety health to workers. Due to the changing weather conditions resulting in heat and exposure to UV radiation but also extreme weather conditions, working conditions for those working outside are put under higher risk. The International Organisation for Standardisation, ISO, is therefore preparing guidance on OHS risks arising from climate change. The work is undertaken under the ISO/TC 283 'Occupational Health & Safety Management' in the newly set up Task Group (TG) 8.

The issue of risks for workers arising from the changing climate and extreme weather has been discussed at the last ISO/TC 283 Plenary in October 2022. The initial proposal was to prepare an ISO/PAS, which is a standardisation deliverable that can be developed in a short term. ISO/TC 283 however decided setting up a TG which will develop a preliminary draft for a new high level guidance document. A TG cannot prepare a standard. The work of this new TG started in March. To address the OHS risks stemming from the European green and digital transition, the ETUC will launch its own project “Prevention of OSH risks emerging from the dual transitions and at the centre of the EU trade strategy”. The project will 1) develop a European trade union agenda to adapt to the challenges brought by climate change on occupational safety and health, 2) contribute to national strategies to prevent the OSH risks associated to digitalisation and 3) contribute to the European policy framework on trade with proposals to protect the occupational safety and health of workers. Moreover, EU-OSHA is increasingly looking at the interplay between OSH and climate change. Already in 2021, it has published a [report on how climate change is creating new risks for workers in agriculture and forestry](#).

Ladder safety at European Social Dialogue for the Cleaning sector



On 16 March, the ETUC was invited to present the findings and recommendations resulting from its [recent study on ladder safety](#) (2022) at the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Industrial Cleaning. At the meeting, UNI Europa – representing the workers in the cleaning sector - and the European Cleaning and Facility Services Industry (EFCI) met to discuss the next steps.

The ETUC addressed the difficulties around ladder safety, namely the lack of a pan-European legislation on ladders, and the disperse legislative landscape at national level with many different regulations and agreements. Standardisation on ladders has its limits as it cannot (and should not) address training, misuse and when a ladder should be used. Adding to the challenges are the decreasing numbers of labour inspections, and the placing of ladders on the market that are non-compliant with existing European standards. The study gives recommendations beyond the scope of standardisation on what can be done to improve the safety when working with ladders. For instance, it found that young professionals and older people have an increased risk of being involved in accidents. Therefore, more awareness-raising and training for both newcomers to the profession and users of advanced age can help. The study further provides recommendations for the risk assessment and working heights

for these specific groups. As working with ladders continues to put workers at risk, the study also advises to change to other work aids whenever possible. Accidents with ladders are the second deadliest work accident. The ETUC is therefore involved in the European standardisation work on ladders (CEN/TC 93) and coordinates with EFBWW and UNI Europa to reduce the numbers of fall accidents. UNI Europa affiliated trade unions from across the European Continent sent letters to several national standardization boards to raise their concern regarding ladder safety. For more information on our work on ladder standards and/or the ETUC study on ladder safety, please contact kbehnke@etuc.org.

Adoption of the 2023 Annual Union work programme for European Standardisation



The [2023 annual Union work programme \(AUWP\) for European standardisation](#) contains 84 actions divided into four main categories: Green transition, Digital transition, Resilience of European industries and Internal market for products and services.

Of particular interest to the ETUC is the topic on “Safety and trustworthy artificial intelligence (AI) systems”. The use of AI in employment raises specific concerns

which include, but are not limited to, disproportionate and undue surveillance at work, discriminatory treatments on the basis of biased algorithms, and the risk of abuse of data protection and privacy. AI is an issue that affects - and will increasingly affect - workers and the employment relationship, therefore it is an issue where trade unions must play a role. The European Commission has recently launched the written procedure on the draft implementing decision regarding the standardisation request for AI, with the aim to develop standards providing the technical details supporting the requirements that will be set out in the future AI Act. The ETUC is participating in the CEN-CENELEC JTC 21 'AI', which is responsible for the development of the requested standards and is contributing to those of particular interests to workers.

Webinar on the functioning of the HAS system



The European Standardisation Organisations CEN and CENELEC are organising a webinar '*The functioning of the HAS system, interactions with HAS consultants and best practices*'. The webinar takes place on 16 May 2023 at 10h00 – 12h00. The European Commission can ask the European Standardisation Organisations

(ESO) to draft a European standard that will support the implementation of the EU legislation. Manufacturers, other economic operators, or conformity assessment bodies can use harmonised standards to demonstrate that products, services, or processes comply with relevant EU legislation. The European Commission contracts so-called “HAS consultants” who will check whether a draft standard – that was prepared by the ESO - is fit for purpose (to underpin the respective legislative act). This webinar will aim to provide first-hand information to CEN and CENELEC Technical Committees on the functioning and state-of-play of the HAS system, and best practices to ensure smooth cooperation between the different actors/stakeholders. During this session, CEN and CENELEC, together with Ernst & Young (EY) will provide guidance to Technical Committees and their experts on how to interact with HAS consultants, clarify the role of HAS consultants and provide hands-on information on the use of the EY tools developed for this purpose. In addition, some best drafting practices regarding the use of Normative references and references to other standards in Annex ZA/ZZ will be shared. The targeted audience are CEN and CENELEC Technical Body Officers and standards drafters. More information as well as the registration to this webinar can be found [here](#). In case of questions related to this webinar or other webinars, please don't hesitate to contact me via trainings@cencenelec.eu.

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