

# Standards affect workers



## Standards are present everywhere in our daily life

Initially associated with product safety and interoperability, their reach has extended to affect a wide range of issues such as occupational health and safety, competences and training, service provision and privacy at work. Many of these areas are right at the centre of trade union work.

## The potential of a standard



### International and European standards play a growing role

not only in the economy, but also in the organisation of production and working conditions. Good standards can improve working conditions – for instance standards for safe working equipment. European standards can help to achieve upwards convergence, meaning that workers in countries with lower requirements and/or weak legislation would benefit from a better standard.



### We want to ensure that standards bring about the highest quality working conditions and respect social dialogue and collective agreements

– which remain the best route to fair working practices. The ETUC supports the development of high-quality standards for products and services which promote the advanced know-how of European workforces and the creation of new, quality employment opportunities. This also means fighting bad standards, especially where there is a potential for undermining established collective agreements and labour law.



### Standards are increasingly used as 'soft regulation'

This means that authorities often refer to standards in legislation, giving them a *de facto* legal status, even though the standards themselves are voluntary commercial products.

# Need for participation

Often, trade unions are not represented in the standardisation arena



This can be because of the low awareness within the trade union movement about what standards can do, a lack of resources to invest in shaping them and a lack of cooperation with national standardisation bodies. Developing a good interactive relationship with your national standards body can be the first step towards better collaboration: for instance, regular consultations on worker-related issues in new standards.

## How can the ETUC help you?

The ETUC represents the voice of European trade unions and workers in standardisation.

We are influencing the standards development in several ways:



### Through effective participation

at policy level by lobbying governing bodies of the European standardisation organisations, the European Commission and other European societal stakeholders.



### Direct involvement

of our experts in technical standardisation committees.



### We provide training

to trade union experts participating in technical committees and foster networking between workers' representatives involved in standardisation activities. We also inform trade unions about new developments in standardisation.

## How to get involved?

- 1 Through direct and active participation in standardisation committees**, trade union representatives can have their say when the standard is being drafted. They provide relevant expertise from affected sectors and help to achieve a balanced representation.
- 2** The ETUC strongly encourages all member organisation representatives who are interested in the world of standards **to get in touch with us!** Likewise, if you would like to raise an issue that you think the ETUC should be involved in, please contact us.
- 3** The ETUC encourages its national affiliates to **approach their respective National Standards Body** with a view to co-operating on standards that impact workers. Please do not hesitate to contact your National Standardisation Body to ask for any new draft standards concerning workers (and their working conditions), and how you can get involved.