



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Recommendations on regulatory cooperation and standardization policies

Working Party on
Regulatory Cooperation and
Standardization Policies

C

International Harmonization of Standards and Technical Regulations¹

The Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies,

Noting that the recommendation, which follows, represents a direct contribution by UNECE to the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe;

Recognizing that the harmonization of standards and technical regulations is an important factor in the development of international trade and industrial, scientific and technical cooperation;

Noting that differences in standards and technical regulations applied to international trade in some cases give rise to technical barriers;

Considering that complete and effective harmonization of standards and technical regulations is possible only if carried out in a purpose-oriented manner at the international, regional and national levels;

Seeking to further the objectives of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade;

Considering that the harmonization of standards and technical regulations should be directed towards:

- (a) expanding the mutually-advantageous exchange of goods and services and facilitating the conclusions of mutual recognition agreements;

¹ Recommendation adopted in 1970, revised in 1980 and 1995.

- (b) developing and deepening industrial cooperation;
- (c) jointly solving technological and scientific problems;
- (d) improving and assuring product quality;
- (e) reducing the consumption of materials and energy resources;
- (f) improving labour protection, health protection and safety;
- (g) improving environmental protection;

Considering that the recommendation applies particularly to international and regional standards relevant for sectors included in the ECE Standardization List:

Has agreed to recommend the following general principles of harmonization and standards and technical regulations:

- C.1** Work on harmonization of standards and technical regulations should as far as possible be linked with international cooperation in the economic field, in science, technology, and environmental protection.
- C.2** Harmonization of standards and technical regulations should preferably begin with the preparation of a list of standards and technical regulations to be harmonized, taking into account existing or planned economic and scientific and technological arrangements or agreements between countries.
- C.3** The standards and technical regulations selected for harmonization should be those which:
 - (a) Ensure technologically and economically optimal product interchangeability and compatibility;
 - (b) Promote mutual understanding and influence other standards and technical regulations;
 - (c) Play an important part in mutual recognition of conformity assessment procedures;
 - (d) Influence health protection, labour protection, environmental protection and improvements in fire safety;
 - (e) Govern requirements concerning preservation, packaging, marking, labelling, transport and storage of goods;
 - (f) Influence the economical use of raw materials and energy;
 - (g) Create or threaten to create technical barriers to international trade.

- C.4** When developing an international standard, other international standards or existing national and regional standards, where appropriate, should be taken into consideration.
- C.5** When developing national standards and technical regulations, first of all international standards and then regional standards should whenever possible be taken as the basis, and national standards and technical regulations in other countries should be borne in mind as far as possible.
- C.6** The timing of any revision of regional and national standards should, if possible, be coordinated with that of the adoption of revision of the relevant international standards.
- C.7** Where national technical regulations or standards are being prepared and relevant international standards exist or their completion is imminent, these or the relevant parts of them should be used as a basis for national technical regulations or standards except when such international standards or relevant parts would be an ineffective or inappropriate means for the fulfilment of the legitimate objectives pursued, for instance because of fundamental climatic or geographical factors or fundamental technological problems.
- C.8** With a view to more extensive harmonization of standards and technical regulations, representatives of UNECE member countries should, as far as they are able, participate in the work of the appropriate international organizations engaged in the preparation of international standards, concerning products in respect of which technical regulations and standards are adopted or are being prepared at the national level.
- C.9** The texts of national standards and technical regulations of importance to international trade and industrial cooperation should indicate whether they are in conformity with corresponding international or regional standards. Where deviations occur they should be specified in the text and, if possible, the reason should be indicated. Furthermore, deviations should be so described and accompanied by such information as to facilitate the conclusion of contracts referring to such standards or regulations.
- C.10** When developing and harmonizing standards and technical regulations, account should be taken of the relevant principles of the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade.