www.unece.org/leginstr/stand.html

The UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies (WP.6) is a forum for dialogue among regulators and policymakers. Its broad mandate includes technical regulations, standardization, conformity assessment, metrology, market surveillance and risk management.

Recent accidents in mines, offshore facilities, plants and installations have resulted in loss of human and animal life, unprecedented environmental degradation and economic damage. At the same time, dangerous products – i.e. hazardous toys, counterfeit pharmaceuticals, contaminated milk – have put consumers at risk. Unsafe and unscrupulous production methods also weaken compliant producers that are unable to compete against the proliferation of cheap and low-quality goods.

The Working Party aims at promoting regulatory policies to protect the health and safety of consumers and workers, and preserve our natural environment, without creating unnecessary barriers to trade. To contribute to this goal, it develops recommendations, and undertakes sectoral initiatives and capacity-building activities.

The recommendations and best practices are voluntary but are widely used by public authorities. In particular, they have been referenced as best practice by the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade and by the European Union. They have formed the basis of regulatory cooperation in the Commonwealth of Independent States and in the Eurasian Economic Commission. Since 1970, 16 Recommendations have been adopted.

The Recommendations are practical tools, developed by authorities and experts and of immediate use in regulatory practice.

Recommendation D – last revised in 2013 – encourages authorities to use international, regional and national standards in regulatory and policy work whenever possible and sets out various practical methods for referencing standards in technical regulations.

Recommendation L enshrines the “International Model”, which is a set of tools that countries can use to approximate technical regulations in specific sectors. The Working Party has taken the lead to implement this Recommendation by fostering “sectoral initiatives” to develop common regulatory frameworks in the areas of telecom, earth-moving machinery, equipment for explosive environments, and pipeline safety. Texts related to these sectoral initiatives are constantly kept up to date on the website at www.unece.org/trade/wp6/SectoralInitiatives/START/START.html.

Recommendations M and N compile best practice in the area of enforcement. In all UNECE markets, non-compliant products are on the rise; but competent authorities and consumer associations are severely underfunded. For these reasons, action to ensure that regulations are enforced is of paramount importance.

The Working Party has published a glossary of terms related to market surveillance activities (ECE/TRADE/389), and has developed a database gathering information on market surveillance authorities, their mandate, their legislative references, and their sector of activity (www.unece.org/tradewelcome/areas-of-work/working-party-on-regulatory-cooperation-and-standardization-policies-wp6/areas-of-work/tradewp6marketsurveillance/database-on-market-surveillance.html).

Recommendations P and R offer guidance on how risk-management tools can be used in order to better prioritize standardization and regulatory work, make better informed choices between regulatory alternatives and better manage regulatory crises. They also advise authorities on how risk management tools can form the basis for regulatory cooperation work. Best practice developed by the Working Party in this area has also been published in the volume *Risk Management in Regulatory Frameworks: Towards a Better Management of Risks* (ECE/TRADE/390).

Reinforcing regulatory and enforcement authorities is a key priority in promoting safer production methods and more sustainable consumption patterns. An important prerequisite is for the staff of these bodies to be knowledgeable and aware of standards and related issues. At its 2012 session, the Working Party adopted Recommendation I. This Recommendation encourages authorities—where feasible and where the legal framework permits—to further promote the inclusion of standards as a subject in the curricula of universities and research centres. The Working Party has also organized several workshops and awareness-raising events at the request of national authorities or regional groupings to share best practice in its areas of work.

Recommendations to UNECE Governments on Standardization Policies

The Recommendations have been compiled in a single publication (ECE/TRADE/378) available at www.unece.org/trade/wp6/Recommendations/trd-378_ENG.pdf

A. Further Developments in International Cooperation on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies

B. Coordination of Technical Regulations and Standardization

C. International Harmonization of Standards and Technical Regulations

D. Reference to Standards

E. Treatment of Imported Products, Processes and Services

F. Creation and Promotion of International Agreements on Conformity Assessment

G. Acceptance of Conformity Assessment Results

H. Presentation of UNECE Recommended Standards and Harmonized Technical Regulations

I. Methodological Studies and Education

J. Definitions

K. Metrological Assurance of Conformity Assessment and Testing

L. International Model for Technical Harmonization Based on Good Regulatory Practice for the Preparation, Adoption and Application of Technical Regulations via the Use of International Standards

M. Use of Market Surveillance Infrastructure as a Complementary Means to Protect Consumers and Users against Counterfeit Goods

N. Good Market Surveillance Policies and Practices

P. Crisis Management within a Regulatory Framework

R. Managing Risk in Regulatory Frameworks

Website: http://www.unece.org/trade/wp6/