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Position Paper

2026-2030 Gender Equality Strategy August 2025

Executive Summary

CEN and CENELEC are committed to ensuring that standardization supports Gender Equality. CEN and CENELEC aim to develop gender-responsive standards that reflect the needs, experiences, and characteristics of all users and encourage that those drafting standards reflect the diversity of the societies they serve.

In this position paper, CEN and CENELEC outline the work already being carried out to achieve these goals and outline how the Gender Equality Strategy can further support this progress via three key recommendations:

1. Support Gender-Responsive Standardization Across EU Policy Areas
2. Promote the Collection and Use of Gender-Disaggregated Data
3. Encourage Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement in Standardization

The Role of Standardization in Supporting Gender Equality

Standardization plays a critical, yet often under-recognized, role in advancing gender equality by shaping the design, safety, accessibility, and usability of products, services, and systems across all sectors of society. Standards influence how everyday items are produced and how services are delivered, ranging from personal protective equipment to healthcare technologies and digital tools.

When standards are developed with inclusivity from the onset and throughout, inclusive standards help ensure that the diverse needs of all users, including women and gender-diverse individuals, are properly addressed. This includes integrating gender-responsive considerations such as anthropometric differences, physiological variations, and usage patterns into technical specifications. In doing so, standardization can help correct health and safety concerns, enable design without biases, prevent discrimination, and promote gender equal outcomes.

By embedding gender mainstreaming via systematic gender-responsive standards

processes, standardization bodies like CEN and CENELEC contribute to more equitable and safe environments, products, services and systems thereby reinforcing the EU's commitment to fundamental rights and social justice.

Gender Responsive Standardization

CEN and CENELEC are committed to developing gender-responsive standards that reflect the needs, experiences, and characteristics of all users, regardless of gender. Recognizing that standards have a direct impact on the safety, health, and well-being of individuals, our organizations actively promote the integration of gender perspectives throughout the standardization process.

Alongside Gender Responsive Standards, CEN and CENELEC encourages the participation of diverse stakeholders in technical committees, applying inclusive language, and supporting the use of disaggregated data—particularly in areas such as anthropometrics, ergonomics, personal protective equipment, and healthcare. By embedding gender considerations into the [**Design for All**](#) approach and throughout the lifecycle of a standard (from proposal to drafting to publication and then periodic review/revision), CEN and CENELEC adopts a holistic approach to inclusive standards. Our work aligns with the European Commission (EC) call for greater inclusivity and reinforces the role of standardization as a strategic lever for achieving gender equality across Europe.

CEN and CENELEC have further strengthened our commitment through the publication of the practical guide, [**How to Be Gender Responsive in Standardization**](#) (2024). This user-friendly brochure, developed by our Informal Gender Diversity & Inclusion Coordination Group, offers clear definitions of gender-responsive standards and actionable tips to support standards drafters in integrating gender perspectives into all stages of standards' development. This ensures diverse expertise and inclusive language when applying sex-disaggregated data and considering physical/physiological differences and social/cultural norms and roles.

By sharing concrete best practices and providing curated resources—such as tools, protocols, and awareness-raising guides—CEN and CENELEC equip standard-makers to design more equitable, effective, and inclusive standards that better address the needs of both women and men. This brochure exemplifies CEN and CENELEC's ongoing efforts to embed gender mainstreaming as a default in the European standardization process.

Encouraging Diverse Participation in Standard-setting

CEN and CENELEC actively promote diversity and inclusion in the standardization ecosystem by working to ensure that both the stakeholder community and the technical experts involved in drafting standards reflect the diversity of the societies they serve. This means engaging a broad spectrum of voices—from industry, academia, civil society, and public authorities—to capture varied perspectives and needs.

However, CEN and CENELEC are taking steps to raise awareness of women's underrepresentation in technical committees, where critical decisions are made about the design and safety of products, systems, and services. Increasing the participation of

women (and other less represented voices) in these expert groups is essential to ensure representative expert groups are developing standards. That being said, more women representation does not necessarily equate with inclusive standards. CEN and CENELEC encourages national members, technical bodies and their working groups to foster inclusive practices consider gender implications in standardization work. Addressing this gap is a priority for achieving truly representative technical committees.

Advancing Inclusive Standards Through Representative Anthropometric Data

CEN, CENELEC and its Members, are proactively responding to the EC's recent [study on the inclusiveness of anthropometrics in European harmonised standards](#) and the ISO-IEC publication of [6 key Case Studies on Gender Responsive Standards](#), by addressing the identified gaps in inclusive and representative data. Recognising the critical role of accurate anthropometric data in developing inclusive standards, CEN and CENELEC, together with their TCs, are actively participating in EU-funded EISMEA projects aimed at generating updated and representative datasets.

These initiatives support the development of standards that reflect the diversity of the European population. In addition, CEN and CENELEC are committed to promoting the importance of inclusivity across all stages of standardization. Through the implementation of Gender Responsive Standards, they are raising awareness among TCs about the significance of inclusive anthropometrics. This approach ensures that standards—and, by extension, the products and services based on them—are equitable, accessible, and reflective of the varied needs of all users.

Case Study: How European Leadership at the International Level supports global progress on Menstrual Health and Wellbeing

Via their participation in ISO and IEC, the National Members of CEN and CENELEC ensure that European expertise fosters international innovation in standardization. One such example of this leadership is in the ISO TC 338 on Menstrual Products, where SIS (Swedish Institute for Standards), the Swedish CEN Member, holds the secretariat. Established in 2022, TC 338 covers all manufactured menstrual products designed for collecting and absorbing menstrual fluid. The aim is to develop standards that provide a global definition of quality, encompassing both safety and performance, and to make menstrual products more accessible and available globally.

By 2027, the TC aims to publish their first two standards, ISO/NP 25130 "Menstrual Products- General and Safety Requirements" and ISO/NP 25071 "Menstrual Products- Vocabulary". These horizontal standards will be followed by more product specific standards. Furthermore, CEN and CENELEC regularly adopt International Standards into European Standards. For example, the recent adoption of EN ISO 53800 "Guidelines for the promotion and implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment".

Recommendations

1. Support Gender-Responsive Standardization Across EU Policy Areas

The EC should formally recognize standardization as a key lever for implementing gender

equality objectives, particularly in areas such as health, safety, digitalization, and industrial policy. Gender-responsive standards should be embedded across relevant EU funding instruments, regulatory frameworks, and public procurement guidelines. The EC should consider and request any new / additional European standards which could support the aims of the Gender Equality Strategy.

2. Promote the Collection and Use of Gender-Disaggregated Data

The EC should encourage and support the development and use of anthropometric and other relevant datasets that are disaggregated by sex, gender, age, and other relevant factors. This data is critical for developing inclusive and safe products, particularly in fields such as personal protective equipment, transport, healthcare, and consumer goods. The EC could further support these efforts through the creation of a comprehensive and public database of anthropometric measurements.

3. Encourage Inclusive Stakeholder Engagement in Standardization

Ensure broader and more systematic inclusion of diverse stakeholders—especially women’s organizations, gender equality bodies, and civil society groups—in consultations and standard development processes. This will help ensure that standards reflect the lived experiences and needs of a wider population.

About CEN and CENELEC

CEN (European Committee for Standardization) and CENELEC (European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization) are recognized by the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) as European Standardization Organizations responsible for developing standards at European level, as per European Regulation 1025/2012. The members are the National Standards Bodies (CEN) and National Electrotechnical Committees (CENELEC) from 34 European countries. European Standards (ENs) and other standardization deliverables are adopted by CEN and CENELEC, are accepted and recognized in all of these countries. These standards contribute to enhancing safety, improving quality, facilitating cross-border trade and strengthening of the European Single Market. They are developed through a process of collaboration among experts nominated by business and industry, research institutions, consumer and environmental organizations, trade unions and other societal stakeholders. CEN and CENELEC work to promote the international alignment of standards in the framework of technical cooperation agreements with ISO (International Organization for Standardization) and the IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission).