

Swedish Standards Consumers & Workers Council

Justification/Raison d'être

Standardization and societal stakeholders¹

European Standards (and International standards) are relevant to many aspects of our daily lives. They play an important role, alongside regulation, in protecting the environment, enhancing safety as well as the health and well-being of consumers and employees. When products and services conform to European Standards, this means that they are safe, reliable and of good quality.

Standards are created by bringing together the experience and expertise of different stakeholders, such as the producers, sellers, buyers, users and regulators of a particular material, product, process or service. These stakeholders are represented by business and industry associations, public authorities, professional bodies, trade associations, consumer organizations, environmental organizations, trade unions, enforcement bodies, testing and inspection bodies, etc.

Participation from all sectors of society gives standards users confidence that standards reflect not only the scientific and technical state of the art, but that they also take into consideration the concerns and priorities of wider society.

Short background and history of the “Swedish Standards Consumers & Workers Council”

The Swedish Standards Consumers & Workers Council, (the Council), was established in 1990 as “SIS Consumers Council” to promote consumer participation in standardization. Since the year 2000, the target groups have been extended to include end-user representatives from unions, as well as from disability, environmental and other non-profit organizations.

Purpose and tasks

The main purpose of the Council is to promote end-user representation in standardization and also promote the application of relevant standards.

The Council's tasks:

- To strengthen the participation of end- user representatives (from consumer, workers, disability, environmental and other non-profit organizations) in both national and international standardization projects.
- To encourage interest from end- user representatives through information, training and grants for the costs of participating in standardization projects and international meetings.
- To monitor and evaluate standardization projects of interest to end-user groups
- To increase the knowledge of how and in which areas end-user representation will lead to standards that are better and fit for purpose.

¹ <http://www.cencenelec.eu/societal/Pages/default.aspx>

Organization, members and financing

The Council consists of a Chairman, a Secretary and, since 2014, seven members who meet about five times per year.

Ivar Rönnbäck, Chairman - the Swedish Consumer Agency
 Hans von Axelson, Vice Chairman - the Swedish Agency for Participation,
 Mia Ahlgren - the Swedish Disability Federation
 My Billstam - the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, LO
 Jens Henriksson - the Swedish Consumers' Association
 Stina Lindblad - the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation
 AnnSofie Kero - Swedish Work Environment Authority
 Stefan Lundberg - the Confederation for Professional Employees
 Helene Edmark, Secretary – Swedish Standards Institute, SIS

The Council is funded by the Swedish Government and organized as an independent part of the Swedish Standardization Federation (a collaborative organization for the three Swedish National Standardization Bodies, SIS, SEK and ITS).

End-user organizations/Non-profit organizations and the “Swedish model”

The organizations can apply for financing of, for example:

- Project/committee fees for participation in Swedish standardization technical committees
- Travel expenses to be able to participate in international standardization meetings
- Projects and other activities to enhance and promote end-user participation in standardization projects

Additionally, the project funding allows some resources for co-ordination and promotion work both at the Swedish Consumers' Association and the Swedish Disability Federation. The aim is to also support the environmental NGOs, which has been done in the past, but present activity is low.

The Council finances end-user representation in all three Swedish Standard bodies SIS, SEK and ITS. But involvement in electrotechnical standards and information technology standards is a relatively limited part of overall representation.

It is very important for the Council that all the experts involved in the standardization process from end-user organizations participate on the same terms as the industry and other members of the national committees.

The “Swedish model” of financing fees instead of free participation of the end-user experts in standards aims at achieving equal treatment and the same financial contribution to the technical committees in standardization work.