



Guidelines to assist members of
standards committees in preparing
user-friendly European Standards



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1. Foreword

IFAN Guide 3 was first published in 2008 and was widely adopted and was the basis for CEN/CENELEC Guide 17, developed by CEN-CLC BT WG 208 of which IFAN is a member, and the first edition was published in 2010. However, the members of the IFAN European Group felt that it is still useful to highlight the elements of the guide which are important to standards users, and we hope will be considered by standards writers and developers.

When participating in European standards work as a national delegate, you cooperate with representatives of other national standards bodies to prepare European Standards or revisions of European standards. However, you, as an expert in the field, will probably not be the "real" user of the resulting standards. For example, if you are a materials expert, "your" standards will be used especially by people in the engineering and purchasing departments, and their companies can range in size from very small enterprises to large organizations and may even belong to different industry sectors. In addition, since you are an expert in the subject to be standardized, you have much more background information than the normal standards user. Therefore, the resulting standards may concentrate too much on the technical details of the subject, often neglecting the application aspects. Therefore, the aim of these Guidelines prepared by the International Federation of Standards Users (IFAN) is to provide support for your role in standards development, for the benefit of ALL users of the standards being developed, as it is the mission of IFAN, to encourage the implementation of standards.

2. Objectives

It is the aim of these Guidelines to help to:

- Make European Standards as user-friendly as possible
- Keep a high quality of European Standards
- Inform standards developers of the changing needs of users – see Annex 'What does a standards users look for in a standard' [\[link\]](#)

in order to minimize the problems and costs of implementing standards for trade and industries and the various other sectors, particularly for small and medium sized enterprises. The intention is also to achieve a high level of implementation by appropriate organizations such as regulators, governmental and non-governmental agencies or service providers, and to support training and education, see IFAN Guide 4 Education & Training about standardization: Different needs for different roles ([link here](#)).

Based on the reference documents for preparing standards which are listed in clause 5, a checklist has been developed from the perspective of standards users to help standards writers to achieve these objectives, see clause 4.

It complements other instruments relating to drafting standards.

The application of this checklist may consider sector specific and organizational diversity.

3. Standards Requirements

It is the purpose of a European Standard to establish clear and unambiguous provisions which facilitate trade and communication. To this end, a European Standard needs to:

- be as exhaustive as necessary within the limits of its scope;
- take into full account of current technology and science;

- provide a basis for subsequent technological development.
- have been prepared with user and consumer acceptance in mind.
- make correct use of the appropriate phrasing and terminology (e.g., verb forms for mandatory aspects).
- be comprehensible to qualified users who have not been directly involved in its preparation.
- be gender responsive and use inclusive language as far as possible.
- be designed with the requirements of all persons [e.g., gender, sex, ability, age] in mind.
- note and address which of the SDGs (sustainable development goals) the standard relates to

In addition to the existing rules for standardization work and drafting of standards published by the relevant standards organizations (see clause 5), these Guidelines are intended as a comprehensive tool to assist experts, project leaders, chairpersons and secretaries of European standards committees in preparing user-friendly standards. These Guidelines have been established in recognition of the requirement for standards to be as user-friendly as possible. If the benefits of standardization are to be achieved, it is a prerequisite that European Standards be accepted and used widely.

See Also:

CEN-CLC Guide 33 - Guide for addressing environmental issues in testing standards (2016)

<https://www.cencenelec.eu/european-standardization/european-standards/types-of-deliverables/cen-cenelec-guides/Standards>

Supporting the SDGs: <https://www.cencenelec.eu/european-standardization/sustainable-development-goals-sdgs/supporting-ressources/>

4. Checklist

4.1 Substance

4.1.1 Is the structure and wording of the European Standard understandable by all users?

While developing a standard, members of standards committees need to bear in mind the fact that standards are used by a wide range of people with different levels of knowledge, for different applications and in different environments, therefore:

- a standard needs to be understandable by qualified persons who have not been directly involved in its preparation.
- use plain language and avoid jargon.

Summary: Use clear wording in standards.

4.1.2 Are the extent and the scope of the standard user-friendly?

Short standards and standards with concise scopes are user-friendly.

- A standard with a very extensive scope may require frequent revision, e.g., to consider new variants, which should be split into user-friendly parts.

Summary: Aim to produce standards of a usable size. (see also 4.1.4)

4.1.3 Does the subject of the standard require several inter-related European standards?

Problems can arise when several inter-related European standards replace national standards which should be treated as a “package” at the European level, as explained below.

Otherwise, as the adoption of a European Standard is compulsory after its publication, the situation will arise that, in the case of linked standards, the remaining national standards are no longer self-consistent.

This happens because then there exists a mix of previous national and new European Standards which may not be well suited to each other. In the case of the package approach a special provision should apply by which the relevant national standards are not required to be withdrawn until the last standard in the “package” has been adopted.

This means that, for a transitional period, two standards on the same subject may exist simultaneously at a national level. Users can then choose either to continue working with the original standard or to change to the new one.

It only becomes mandatory for conflicting national standards to be withdrawn at the end of the transition period when the package of European standards has been completed.

A cautionary note should be included in the national implementation of the European standard, drawing attention to the ‘package’ and the DOW (date of withdrawal) of national standards, explaining what it means in individual national implementation clauses.

Summary: Propose the “package approach” for inter-related standards according to the CEN guidance on the package of European standards.

For reference, DOW and inter-related Package: <https://boss.cen.eu/reference-material/guidancedoc/pages/dow/>

4.1.4 Is the standard numbering as simple as possible (and not multi-layered)?

Complicated standard numbers – e.g., “EN 60684-3-100 to 105” – are not user friendly:

- Standard numbers with part and sheet numbers should be avoided.
- Part or sheet numbers xxx to yyy should not be used.
- Every standard and part should have a unique and machine readable identifier.

Summary: Keep alpha-numeric designations of standards unique (see also 4.1.2).

4.1.5 Do standard designations exist for technical items and procedures?

There are many circumstances in which, instead of using a lengthy description of an item, it is convenient to have a brief designation by which the item may be identified uniquely, e.g., for a hexagon head screw with thread M12, nominal length 80 mm, property class 8.8, according to

ISO 4017: Hexagon head screw ISO 4017 – M12 x 80 – 8.8.

- Annex C of Principles and rules for the structure and drafting of CEN/CENELEC documents (ISO/IEC Directives – Part 2:2022) specifies that it is particularly useful if all tradeable items are provided with standard designations. The same principle should apply for standardized procedures, e.g., test methods.
- Standard designations should always be illustrated by an example.

- All possible non-numerical characteristic should be given by concise, citable, uniform symbols or abbreviations respectively (see 4.1.6).

Summary: Use standard designations, see also 4.2.2, because it is a problem for users if they are not available.

4.1.6 Have abbreviations been used and explained?

Because standards users have typically to apply a variety of standards, they expect a consistent use of abbreviations. An explanation of the origin of abbreviations will help users of the standard to understand and remember them:

- Different abbreviations used in different languages, e.g., in tables of European Standards, should be avoided if possible or otherwise be explained.
- Standard designations should use agreed upon identical abbreviations or their source language should be specified.
- Abbreviations should be explained the first time they appear.

Summary: Use uniform abbreviations and provide explanations.

4.1.7 Does the standard include the following information and, if applicable, list all important changes to the previous edition of the document (foreword)?

For standards users, it is very important to get information about changes of standards and their relations:

- The appropriate text (supplied by the committee secretariat) should give a statement of significant technical changes from any previous edition of the document.
- All European or national organizations involved in preparing the document should be mentioned.
- The foreword should indicate whether the document replaces other documents completely or in part.
- The foreword should indicate the relationship between this and any other documents.
- For adopted IEC standards, information should be included about the next “maintenance review date” (see ISO/IEC directives, IEC Directive Part 1 Supplement 2020, Clause 2.9).

Summary: Place the standard in the context of those involved in its preparation and in conjunction with any related documents, and give significant changes.

4.1.8 Are all normative documents available?

The application of a standard often requires further standards. The user of a standard is disadvantaged if not all referenced standards are equally available (e.g., testing standards needed for a material standard):

- All documents which are necessary for implementing the standard should be listed in the normative references and should be available when the standard is published.

- Drafts should not be used as normative references as they are often not publicly available, and may change following comments stage.

Summary: Ensure that all normative documents are available.

4.1.9 Has the standard been written in an inclusive language and is it designed to be gender responsive?

Generally, users prefer standards to be written in inclusive language. It is also important to ensure that the end product of a standard is appropriate for all regardless of gender, sex, ability, age etc.

- Check if the text of the standard is gender, sex, ability, age etc. neutral.
- Is the standard suitable for all to use regardless of gender, sex, ability, age etc.
- Is the end product of the standard suitable for all consumers regardless of gender, sex, ability, age etc.
- Use inclusive language: See chapter 5.5 <https://boss.cen.eu/reference-material/guidancedoc/pages/prefiles/>
- Apply a gender lens to the standard – See UNECE Guidelines on developing gender responsive standards.

Summary: Check that the standard's language is inclusive.

4.2 Relevant national details concerning the national adoption of EN standards.

4.2.1 Does the national foreword give details of the most important differences between the European standard and the national standard(s) it is replacing?

For a standards user, it is of utmost importance to get information about how previous national standards and replacement European Standards differ to the greatest extent possible:

- The most important differences in scope, content and structure should be given in a logical and comprehensible way at an appropriate place in the national elements of the national reproduction of an EN. In the case of reproduction, a national title page is generally added.
- A national foreword and national annexes are permitted.
- In particular, omission of previously included national standard types, sizes, procedures, or regulations should be explained.
- Where the content of a former national standard is distributed among several ENs or a complete field of standardization is restructured, the new philosophy, layout and structure should be illustrated.

Summary: Check for a “package approach” (see 4.1.3).

4.2.2 Have standard designations been used for technical items and procedures?

All tradeable technical items and procedures should have standard designations as explained in subclause 4.1.5. If that is not the case in an European Standard to be adopted as a national standard, then it should be provided in the elements of the national publication:

- If a standard designation is missing in a European Standard, it should be included with an example in the national foreword, in accordance with Annex C of CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations Part 3 (see 4.1.5).
- All possible non-numerical characteristics should be given concise, citable, uniform symbols or abbreviations (see 4.1.6).

Summary: Check for standard designations.

4.3 Assistance in implementing standards.

4.3.1 Are users informed well in advance about forthcoming new European Standards and the removal or revision of related national standards?

The implementation of new standards in an organization can seldom occur immediately. Depending on the complexity, it takes some time to prepare the transition, especially when a new European Standard is replacing a former national one:

- This information is especially important for operational planning such as participation and implementation on the users' side. Therefore, when a new standards project is announced, every effort should be made to make it widely known, such as through the appropriate media.
- Has the standard been cited in the OJEU in a timely manner or in the UK is it listed on the official designated standards list?
- It is important for users to be kept informed of changes so a robust system should be in place.

Summary: Use every opportunity to provide detailed information.

4.3.2 Are contacts maintained with existing and potential users?

The composition of a committee is usually very limited; hence its members should look for a broader user feedback:

- Through relevant user associations such as IFAN and individual experts.
- Through relevant industry organizations and associations.

Summary: Involve useful contacts at an early stage.

4.3.3 Do the responsible national committees provide user support to facilitate the implementation of standards?

Where there are major changes, it may not be sufficient just to give a listing of the main ones. It may also be necessary to explain to the users of the standard the reasons for the changes or even to offer them some form of training:

- by including explanations in the national foreword (see 4.2.1) or national annex.
- by listing the differences between the new standard and its predecessor in a supplement or the like; or (by redlining the changes in the standard).
- by offering explanatory courses and providing information through workshops, information brochures, online courses and information or other relevant data media.

Summary: Support additional informative elements in standards and provide appropriate assistance for users.

4.3.4 Can testing already be carried out in accordance with new test standards?

It is always important to determine whether the test methods proposed can be performed with existing equipment.

- If it is not possible, when will new or amended test methods and equipment be available? Is a transition period necessary?
- When new test standards or amended test procedures are introduced, this can cause operational problems if suppliers and customers cannot immediately carry out the new tests.

Summary: Include explanations in the national foreword, national annex or in supplements about the availability of the tests, and allow a transition period if necessary

COMMITTEE SCORE CARD for SECTION 4

This is intended for committee members to copy and fill in as required

Clause	Topic to be checked	OK?
4.1	Substance	
4.1.1	Is the structure and wording of the European Standard understandable by users?	
4.1.2	Are the extent/scope of the standard user-friendly?	
4.1.3	Does the field of standardization involve several inter-related European standards?	
4.1.4	Is the standard numbering as simple as possible (and not multi-layered)?	
4.1.5	Do standard designations exist for technical items and procedures?	
4.1.6	Have abbreviations been used and explained?	
4.1.7	Does the standard include the information listed and, if applicable, list all important changes to the previous edition of the document (Foreword)?	
4.1.8	Are all normative documents available?	
4.1.9	Has the standard been written in inclusive language and is it designed to be gender responsive?	
4.2	Relevant national details concerning the national adoption of an EN standard	
4.2.1	Does the national foreword give details of the most important differences between the new European standard and the national standard(s) it is replacing?	
4.2.2	Have standard designations been used for technical items and procedures?	
4.3	Assistance in implementing standards	
4.3.1	Are users informed well in advance about forthcoming new European Standards and the removal or revision of related national standards?	
4.3.2	Are contacts maintained with existing and potential users?	
4.3.3	Do the responsible national committees provide user support to facilitate the implementation of standards?	
4.3.4	Can testing already be carried out in accordance with new test standards?	

5. General reference documents for standards work

Reference documents for those involved in European standards work and in preparing European Standards:

CEN/CENELEC Internal Regulations

Part 1 Organization and Structure, 2022, [English Edition](#)

Part 2 Common Rules for Standardization Work, 2022, [English Edition](#)

Part 3 Principles and Rules for the structure and drafting of CEN and CENELEC documents 2022, [English Edition](#)

CEN/CENELEC Guide 17 Guidance for writing standards taking into account micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) needs. Source: [English Edition](#)

ISO/IEC Directives supplement 2020 Source: [English Edition](#)

Vienna Agreement: Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN Source: [English Edition](#)

Guidelines for the implementation of the Vienna Agreement Source: [English Edition](#)

Frankfurt Agreement: CENELEC Guide 13: IEC - CENELEC Agreement on Common planning of new work and parallel voting Source: [English Edition](#)

Directive 2015/1535 Of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical regulations and of rules on Information Society services (codification) Source: [PDF Edition](#)

Joint Initiative on European Standardization Source: [PDF Edition](#)

EN 45020 Standardization and related activities, General vocabulary (ISO/IEC Guide 2, latest version) Trilingual version EN 45020, latest version

Source: European Standards are available as national versions from the relevant Standardization Organisations or from Standards Distributors

ISO 24495-1 Plain Language – Part 1: Governing principles and guidelines to the document

ISO/IEC 17000 Conformity assessment - Vocabulary and general principles

Source: Standardization Organisations or Standards Distributors

UNECE Guidelines on developing gender responsive standards.

Source: UNECE

ISO/IEC Gender responsive standards – Guidance for ISO and IEC technical committees

Source: [PDF](#)

6. Annex

What does a standards user look for in a standard?

Who is a standards user? This could be an individual working for an employer committed to using standards, or a sole consultant, or an organization.

An expert position. Standards written by experts and specialists and widely peer reviewed by users.

Content that can be relied on. Written and reviewed to a comprehensive brief, maintained to a high, error-free level, widely accepted, capable of being used in every organization and by every standards user it is aimed at.

Usability. Scope and purpose that is easily understood and remembered, achievable to put into practice, key words and phrases explained, consistent organization of content, process instructions that are repeatable and measurable.

Economical. Affordable to a wide range of users, minimizing wasted time having to eliminate irrelevant information, covering a subject area thoroughly and compactly.

Flexibility. Available in a wide range of formats. Capable of controlled content sharing. Capable of change in subject areas without wholesale and disruptive change for standards users, or very carefully mitigated where not possible.

Confidence building. Instilling standards users' confidence and trust that they are doing things right, and doing the right things.

Accessibility. Responsive to the barriers that standards users may face when using standards.

Alignment with standards users. Forward thinking, focused on businesses' economic, health and safety, quality and reliability, integrity, legal compliance, community sustainability, management and practice strategies tactics and operations.

7. Feedback

User feedback on working with the checklist will be welcome.

Please email your feedback to the IFAN Secretariat

IFAN@IFAN.ORG

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