General Internal Regulations for Belgian Standardisation Committees

Article 1: Validity

1.1 These General Internal Regulations were approved by the NBN Board of Directors at its meeting on 16 December 2022. Pursuant to Article 4 of the Belgian Royal Decree of 25 October 2004 on the implementation of standardisation programmes, it governs the operation of the standardisation committees managed by NBN or entrusted by it to a sector-specific operator.

1.2 These General Internal Regulations may not be derogated from for the operation of one or more standardisation committees.

1.3 These General Internal Regulations may be unilaterally supplemented by Special Internal Regulations applicable to all committees administered by the same sector-specific operator or by NBN. The provisions of these General Internal Regulations shall prevail over those of any Special Internal Regulations and any amendments thereto.

1.4 On registration of a standards committee member, the sector operator or NBN shall send it a copy of these General Internal Regulations and, if applicable, of the Special Internal Regulations. Participation in standardisation work implies acceptance of the General Internal Regulations and, where appropriate, the Special Internal Regulations.

Article 2: Membership in a Standardisation Committee

2.1 Membership in a standardisation committee is open to any individual or legal entity, who is resident in or has its registered office in Belgium, who has a clear, direct and present interest in the work of the standardisation committee(s) of which they wish to become a member. An active member within the meaning of Article 2.5.1 of these General Internal Regulations should have sufficient technical knowledge to take part in the discussions and work (or at least part of it) of the standards committee(s) concerned.

2.2 To ensure the transparency and coherence of the standardisation system and its processes, all registrations of members of Belgian standardisation committees are centralised in a system managed by NBN.

2.3 Membership in a standardisation committee must be accepted by NBN or the sector operator concerned and is only transferable to a third party with the prior formal agreement of NBN or the sector operator.

2.4 If a candidate is refused access to standardisation as a member of a committee (by the sector operator in charge of the committee concerned, or by NBN for committees directly managed by NBN), the candidate may appeal to NBN Management, which will arrange for mediation.

2.5 Membership categories of standardisation committees

Each sector operator, as well as NBN, may or may not introduce the following categories, provided that they apply to all the committees it manages:

2.5.1 Active member: a member of a committee with full membership rights, who can participate in committee meetings and has voting rights. Only active members are allowed to participate in meetings of European and international technical committees and subcommittees as NBN representatives (delegates), or in the work of technical committee and subcommittee working groups as experts.

2.5.2 Passive member: A member of a committee that does not actively participate in committee meetings and does not have the right to vote. Passive members receive documents relating to standardisation work dealt with by the committee and may send any comments they may have in writing to the Secretary of the committee concerned, who distributes them to the committee members.

2.5.3 Liaison member: A member of a Belgian standardisation committee who is registered in another Belgian standardisation committee as a representative of the former, with a view to promoting the exchange of information and avoiding overlaps or contradictions between two closely related standardisation areas. The presence of a liaison member in a committee is only possible with the agreement of both committees concerned. A liaison member in a committee have access to all of its documents on the dedicated platform. He attends meetings of the committee but has no voting rights in that committee and may not participate in the discussions.

2.6 Any dispute regarding the composition of a committee must be reported in writing as soon as possible to NBN Management, which will arrange for mediation.

Article 3: Chair and Secretary

3.1 Any Belgian standardisation committee may appoint a permanent Chair from among its members in accordance with the procedures laid down by the sectoral operator, or by NBN for the committees managed by it.

3.2 If a standardisation committee does not have a permanent Chair, it may appoint from among its members, at the beginning of each of its meetings, a meeting Chair, whose term shall end at the end of said meeting.

3.3 For each standardisation committee that meets regularly, NBN or the sector operator concerned shall appoint a Secretary, preferably from among its own staff or from among the staff of another sector operator. The Secretary is, among other things, responsible for taking the minutes of the meetings. The sector operator or NBN shall remain liable at all times for any actions taken by the Secretary.

Article 4: Notices of Meetings

4.1 The sector operator or the Secretary of the standardisation committee it has appointed shall notify the members of the committee.

4.2 The notice shall be sent to all members by an appropriate means of communication, preferably ten calendar days before the date fixed for the meeting, except in urgent and unforeseen circumstances.

4.3 The notice shall mention the date, time and place of the meeting (if applicable), the link to access the electronic meeting (if applicable) and the agenda. NBN or the sector operator shall provide the members with the location of the working documents for the meeting on the electronic platform established by NBN.

Article 5: Organisation of meetings and decision-making

5.1 *During a committee meeting* – If the standardisation committee has got a permanent Chair, or if a Chair has been appointed at the beginning of a standardisation committee meeting, he/she shall open, chair and close the meeting. The Chair shall maintain a neutral position in the debates and discussions taking place during the meeting, but shall have the right to vote during the meeting. In the absence of the Chair, the meeting shall be opened, managed and closed by the Secretary. If the Secretary is absent, the Chair, or in the absence of a Chair, the members of the Committee present, shall appoint an *ad interim* Secretary from among the participants to take the minutes of the meeting.

5.2 *Outside committee meetings* – Consulting the members of a standardisation committee to reach a consensus on working documents or on any other subject submitted to a vote shall take place exclusively on the electronic voting platform defined by NBN, except for decisions reached during a committee meeting.

5.3 Any member of a committee may invite, on an ad hoc basis, a third party with specific expertise related to the work of the committee to attend a meeting as an observer, provided that the Secretary is notified in advance. This observer must make himself/herself known to the other participants at the time of opening the meeting. Observers do not have the right to vote.

5.4 The standardisation committee shall reach its decisions by consensus, in accordance with the ISO definition of consensus:

General agreement where there is no sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important party of the concerned interests, in a process that seeks to take into account the views of all parties concerned and to reconcile any divergent positions.

NOTE Consensus does not necessarily imply unanimous agreement.

[NBN EN 45020:2009 'Standardization and related activities — General vocabulary (ISO/IEC Guide 2:2004)', 1.7]

5.5 If no consensus can be reached within a standardisation committee, said standardisation committee shall decide on the position to be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast, excluding abstentions. To qualify for a valid vote in this case, a committee member must have been active in the standardisation committee for at least six months prior to the date on which the vote is taken. The standardisation committee may decide by a simple majority to shorten this six-month period.

5.6 No quorum is required for valid deliberations or decisions, provided that the sector operator or NBN can demonstrate that the members of the committee have been called to the meeting or invited to comment on a working document in accordance with Article 4.2 of these Regulations.

5.7 When consulting or voting in a standardisation committee, either electronically or at a meeting, the same organisation is entitled to only one vote in each vote or consultation. For the purpose of this Article, several separate legal entities with the same business interests (e.g. regional or national headquarters, holding company, etc.) shall be considered to constitute a single organisation.

5.8 At meetings, each member of the standardisation committee shall use the language of his/her choice (Dutch or French) as working language. When circumstances justify it, and provided that all members of the committee present are in favour, English may be used during a meeting. Each standardisation committee shall decide by consensus whether its minutes and communications shall be drawn up in French, Dutch or English. The committees use English for Belgian contributions at the European and international level.

Article 6: Financial terms and conditions for participation

6.1 Notwithstanding Articles 6.2 and 6.3, NBN and sectoral operator may charge each committee member an annual fee for participation in the work of a standardisation committee. This annual fee shall not exceed a maximum fee of €2,850[1] per year, per person and per committee. On 1 January, this maximum fee may be adjusted automatically, by right and without any notification, in line with the increase in the actual cost parameters and for 80% of the price, in accordance with the law on economic recovery measures. For indexation, the following formula will be applied: indexed price = initial price x (0.2 + 0.8 (new index / base index)). The initial price shall be the one applicable at the time the agreement comes into force, and the base index shall be the staff salary index[2] as determined by AGORIA on 1 January of the year in which the agreement is signed.

6.2 NBN and the sector operators shall apply transparent and non-discriminatory membership fees that create identical rights for affiliated committee members belonging to the same category. These categories are defined by NBN in Article 2.5 of these General Regulations.

With regard to participation as a passive member or as a liaison member within the meaning of Articles 2.5.2 and 2.5.3 respectively, the sector operator or NBN may decide to apply a separate rate from that for participation as an active member within the meaning of Article 2.5.1.

[1] The amount specified is that for 2023.
[2] Digital wage cost index.

Notwithstanding Article 6.1 of these Regulations and provided that the conditions of Article 2.1 of these Regulations are met, the fee is not due for authorised representatives of other sector operators ("SO agents"), nor for representatives of public authorities and Category A public institutions as identified on the FPS Strategy & Support website. This fee may be extended to other stakeholders, at the discretion of the sector operator or NBN.

6.3 Specific measures

In line with the European standardisation strategy, the NBN Board of Directors has defined the following discounts, valid for both active and passive members:

6.3.1 Small enterprise (enterprise with an annual average of less than 50 employees in the year before the fee is calculated): The annual fee per member and per committee for a small enterprise cannot be more than 70% of the fee it would pay in the absence of a rebate.

6.3.2 Social actor (a non-governmental, non-profit organisation whose statutes state that its activities serve a general social objective in the fields of the environment, consumer protection or the interests of workers, and which has no financial interest in participating in standardisation work): The annual fee per member and per committee amounts to 0% of the fee that would be payable in the absence of a rebate.

6.3.3 Academic representative (member of the scientific or technical personnel of a college or university whose services are defined by a law or a decree): The annual fee per member and per committee for an academic representative may not exceed 50% of the fee that would be payable in the absence of a rebate.

Article 7: Difference of opinion

If a difference of opinion arises, as described in Article 7 of the Belgian Royal Decree of 25 October 2004, the interested party shall immediately report this to the NBN Director, which shall refer the matter to the NBN Technical Board (TBT). The Technical Board will then endeavour to reach a consensus within the interested parties. If consensus is not reached, the Technical Board will advise the NBN Board of Directors, which will then take a final decision.

Article 8: Appointment of delegates and experts to European and international committees and working groups

8.1 Appointment of delegates to Technical Committees (TC), Sub-Committees (SC) and Project Committees (PC).

Each standardisation committee shall appoint the members and the Head of the national delegation which it wishes to send to a Technical Committee (TC), Sub-Committee (SC) or Project Committee (PC).

A national delegation to a TC, SC or PC consists of a maximum of three persons, including a

Head of Delegation. The delegates must be active members in the Belgian mirror committee of the TC, SC or PC concerned. They attend European (CEN) and international (ISO) meetings as representatives of NBN, defend the position of the Belgian committee and report to the Belgian committee.

NOTE This Article concerns national delegations only. Other members of the Belgian committee may participate in TC, SC and PC meetings in other capacities, such as Working Group Convenor, Chair or Secretary of the TC, SC or PC, or liaison representative.

If a national delegate is found to have taken part in a TC, SC or PC and to have defended a position other than the position of the Belgian committee, he/she will be reminded of this by the sector operator involved or by NBN.

In the event of a repeat offence, the NBN Technical Board (TBT) shall issue an opinion to the NBN Board of Directors, which shall decide on the appropriate measures.

8.2 Appointment of Belgian experts to working groups (WG: working group, *ad hoc* group, task force, etc.)

Members who wish to participate as experts in European (CEN) or international (ISO) standardisation work must obtain the agreement of the Belgian standardisation committee. Despite the fact that they participate in a working group because of their specific expertise, and therefore on their own behalf, these experts regularly inform the Belgian committee concerned of the work being carried out and consult with it in order to defend the position of the Belgian committee as best as possible.

Article 9: Monitoring

An NBN representative may, at any time, without prior notice, attend a standardisation committee meeting or access the working documents thereof.

Nevertheless, NBN does not participate in the formal decision-making process of a standardisation committee, provided that the committee concerned has not been assigned to NBN in its capacity as a sector operator.

Article 10: Confidentiality

Members of the committees involved in the development of standards are subject to a strict confidentiality requirement. All information and documentation, in any form whatsoever, provided or exchanged in connection with the work of the standardisation committees is confidential. Members of the committees may not disclose, transfer or distribute them outside the working sessions of these committees. By way of exception, to support their involvement in the Belgian standardisation committee, committee members may share the aforementioned information and documentation on a restricted basis.

Article 11: Intellectual property

Committee members shall only participate in the development of standards provided that they waive all intellectual rights to the standards and technical documents to which they have contributed. By virtue of their registration and participation in the committees, these members automatically transfer and assign to NBN, free of charge and without consideration, all intellectual rights to which they may be entitled in the standards and technical documents to the development of which they have contributed. The foregoing does not apply to their moral rights.

Article 12: Amendments and effective date

These General Internal Regulations replace the General Internal Regulations of 12 September 2007 and shall become effective on 1 April 2023.

Any future amendments to these General Internal Regulations shall be decided by the NBN Board of Directors. They shall be applicable to sector operators as of the day following their notification, unless the NBN Board of Directors decides to postpone their application (which may never precede the day following their notification to sector operators). In subscribing to General Internal Regulations, each committee member and sector operator agrees to be bound by any amendment to these General Internal Regulations so notified, upon their application.

Version approved by the Board of Directors on 16 December 2022.

Modification to 6.3.2 (discount for societal actors) approved by the Board of Directors on 5 June 2025.