

# First WSC Academic Week emphasizes need for developing education in standardization

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Participants from 30 countries attended the first **Academic Week** organized by the **World Standards Cooperation (WSC)** on 5-9 July 2010, in Geneva, Switzerland.

Representatives of national standards bodies, international organizations and industry met with university professors and other academics to discuss various aspects of the multi-faced relationship between standardization and academia.



Participants recognized that knowledge of standardization and its benefits for business, government and society is increasingly considered an essential “toolbox” for future professionals and managers in both public and private sectors.

As employers of graduate students increasingly ask for professional skills in standardization, there is a growing need to strengthen education programmes to address topics such as the economic benefits of standards, “soft skills” required to participate effectively in standards development, and the distinction and relation between voluntary standards and public policy (including technical regulations).

At the week-long event, universities from various countries presented their different approaches and programmes to standardization education. It was recognized that as the number of courses and education materials on standardization rapidly grows, there is a need to more effectively share information and best practice.

Initiatives such as the Academic Week, undertaken by the WSC partners – the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) – together with those of national standards bodies, stimulate and recognize academic excellence in standardization in many countries, and are highly appreciated by universities.

Two more initiatives were announced during the week.

ISO Secretary-General Rob Steele announced a new competition targeting universities and software developers. The prize will recognize high-quality, attractive business games covering international standardization matters. The award is supported by WSC and co-sponsored by Open Text and the Stratford Institute, Ontario.

Prof. Morard, Dean of the faculty of Economic and Social sciences of the University of Geneva, announced the creation of a new Masters programme in standardization, social regulation and sustainable development, developed in partnership with ISO and SNV, the Swiss national standards body.

However, much more needs to be done to strengthen cooperation on education matters between WSC partners and national standards bodies on the one hand, and with educational institutions, including universities, on the other.

Research and studies on the economic benefits of standards are being pursued by universities, standards bodies and private companies. The consolidation of knowledge from these studies will provide stakeholders with more objective evaluations of the impact of standards, and raise awareness amongst policy makers and business leaders as to the importance of standardization.

Rob Steele commented: “It was clear that the WSC Academic Week created greater awareness on the need for standardization education. It also served to enhance linkages between the standards and academic community, which are beneficial to both parties and to other stakeholders, as a way to assist in tackling the issues of sustainability in an economic, environmental and societal context. This was good, but it was also clear that there is a need to build on the outcomes agreed at the Academic Week to achieve measurable improvement”.