Future of European standardisation

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the future of European harmonisation standards, as a follow up to the Commission's report on the application of procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical standards and regulations as laid down by Directive 98/34/EC.

Members welcome the Commission's intention to review the European standardisation system and to **adopt and submit without delay a proposal** for a modern, integrated standardisation policy, including a revision of Directive 98/34/EC laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical standards and regulations. The Commission is called upon to accompany the proposal for the review of the current legal framework on European standardisation with a strategy document establishing a comprehensive framework for action at European and national level.

Parliament endorses the Commission's intention to integrate into the legal framework of European standardisation the **principles of the World Trade Organization's** agreement on technical barriers to trade (transparency, openness, impartiality, consensus, effectiveness, relevance and coherence) in order to reinforce their application within the European standardisation system. It considers that these principles could be complemented by additional attributes such as maintenance, availability, quality, neutrality and accountability. It stresses, however, that these principles are not in themselves sufficient to ensure that all stakeholders – in particular those representing health and safety, consumer and environmental interests – are adequately represented in the standard-setting process within the European standardisation system. It considers, therefore, that a vital element is the addition of the principle of 'appropriate representation'.

The resolution asks the Commission to identify, through its impact assessment in the context of the revision of the European standardisation system, the best way to reach this aim, evaluating the necessary funding to help SMEs. It stresses, that the development of European service standards, and the drawing-up by professional bodies of their own quality charters or labels at Union level should benefit further harmonisation in the services sector, increase the transparency, quality and competitiveness of European services and promote competition, innovation, the reduction of trade barriers and consumer protection.

1) Empowering the European standardisation system: Parliament stresses that the European legislator must be highly vigilant and precise when defining the essential requirements in regulation, while the Commission must clearly and accurately define the objectives of the standardisation work in the mandates. It stresses that the role of standardisers should be limited to defining the technical means of reaching the goals set by the legislator as well as ensuring a high level of protection.

Parliament maintains that it is of the utmost importance to draw a clear line between legislation and standardisation and reiterates that it is essential for European standards to be developed within a reasonable period of time. It recognises the importance of simplifying the procedure for establishing standards.

The Commission is also invited to:

- develop and implement, in cooperation with the European Standards Organisations (ESOs), an **improved and coherent system for coordinating standardisation** policy and activities, which should cover all aspects of the standardisation process, from the preparation and delivery of mandates, through the monitoring of technical committee work, ensuring that the standards produced are consistent with EU policies and meet the essential requirements of the respective legislation, to the formal adoption, publication and use of the standards;
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revise and rationalise the **process to deliver standardisation mandates** to ESOs, so as to include a consultation phase with relevant stakeholders;

- present an **action plan** aiming at a more integrated EU standardisation system, more efficient and effective standard-setting, better access to standardisation, in particular for SMEs, a stronger EU role in standard-setting at international level and a more sustainable financing system for the development of standards;
- identify a procedure for ensuring that mandated standards comply with other EU policies and legislation beyond the scope of the 'New Approach';
- make decisions on formal objections to standards public in a consolidated way, and make available an updated table of all actions in relation to formal objections;
- present an annual report on the standardisation mandates and the progress on their fulfilment.

- In this context, the report sets out a series of recommendations which aim to **improve access to the standardisation process; enhance the national delegation principle; facilitate access to standards.**

2) Standardisation in support of innovation and sustainable competitiveness: the report recognises that European standardisation is an important tool for promoting innovation, research and development (R&D) and contributing to the Union's competitiveness and the completion of the internal market. It stresses the need to improve mutual awareness and cooperation between standardisers, innovators, academia and the research communities. It calls on the Commission and the Member States, in cooperation with NSBs, to promote the inclusion of standardisation in academic curricula, education (e.g. economic and technical schools), lifelong learning programmes and information campaigns in order to raise awareness amongst current and prospective economic operators and policy-makers about the importance and benefits of standards.

The committee calls on the Commission to develop technology-watch activities so as to identify future R&D output that could benefit from standardisation. It stresses that the improvement of **human health and living conditions** implies developing products that can contribute to the healthy development of the population and improve accessibility, in particular for children and vulnerable people and considers, therefore, that there is an urgent need to integrate health aspects into all relevant products and services and that the European standardisation system needs to develop an improved system to ensure that such aspects are properly addressed when standards are developed.

Lastly, the report stresses the imperative need to **adapt ICT standardisation policy to market and policy developments**, which will lead to achieving important European policy goals requiring interoperability, such as e-health, accessibility, security, e-business, e-government and transport, and will contribute to the development of standards in support of personal data protection.