A standardisation strategy for the Single Market

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The Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection adopted an own-initiative report by Adam BIELAN (ECR, PL) on a standardisation strategy for the single market.

Members recalled that the adoption of European standards facilitates market access, increases the competitiveness of European companies and the safety of citizens, contributes to the strengthening of the single market and simplifies compliance for market participants and national authorities, replacing as many as 34 national standards with one European standard.

General considerations

The report welcomed the adoption of the standardisation strategy, which sets out five main areas for action for the Commission and stressed that the list of areas for action could be further expanded and that there is a need to increase the focus of the strategy on the uptake and implementation of standards, **especially among SMEs**.

Members support the development of European standards in an **accountable, transparent and inclusive way**, ensuring that the needs and specificities of all relevant stakeholders, including SMEs and other societal actors, are taken into account. European standards and European standardisation deliverables should be **open, inclusive, transparent, high-quality** and where applicable, promote durable products which are easier to repair, re-use and recycle and should also respect the rules regarding the protection of personal data and privacy.

The report stressed the importance of standardisation in the areas where non-standardisation has the highest potential to disadvantage consumers including older persons and persons with disabilities.

Members support the creation of an annual standardisation dashboard covering the planned, current and completed standardisation activities with the aim of bringing more transparency to the European standardisation system.

Leveraging the European standardisation system

Members support the launch of the **High-Level Forum on European Standardisation** and the desire to broaden the range of voices heard when identifying standardisation priorities and needs, planning future activities and coordinating approaches in standardisation bodies. This expert group should include a diverse range of stakeholders, including SMEs and consumer organisations, and ensure transparency in its activities. Members also welcomed the creation of an EU excellence hub on standards and the appointment of a chief standardisation officer (CSO) in the Commission.

The report recommended that the Commission should, in consultation with the ESOs, establish a **clear set of key performance indicators** (KPIs) and guidelines on the aspects of standardisation within its remit, in particular for standards linked to the objectives of the European Green Deal and of the Europe Digital Decade.

Members believe that the **long delays** in the standardisation processes stem from various causes. They called on the Commission to avoid the use of overly prescriptive requirements in relation to standardisation requests, which reduce the capacity of experts to propose appropriate and timely solutions to meet the demand for a standard request and narrow the scope for future-proofing standards. EU product

legislation should focus on essential health and safety requirements, applying where possible a technology-neutral approach, leaving the technical requirements to harmonised EU standards.

The report called for **stable, clear criteria** for the assessment of harmonised standards, commonly understood by all stakeholders, as well as for the provision of the necessary resources to ensure their timely assessment.

Upholding the integrity, inclusiveness and accessibility of the European standardisation system

Members considered that an evaluation of Regulation (EU) 1025/2012 may identify areas where further efforts with the option of reforms are needed, beyond the targeted amendment already introduced by the Commission.

The role, participation and input of **relevant stakeholders**, including those representing, SMEs, social partners and environmental, social and consumer interests, should be evaluated and strengthened where such reforms may be beneficial and complementary to work envisaged by the ESOs following the Commission's call for them to present proposals to reform their own internal governance.

The Commission should cooperate with Member States in order to **increase financial support** and ensure that funding programmes are available that can provide substantial, long-term and stable financial support for the involvement of various stakeholders, including SMEs and consumers Organisations. The participation of SMEs at national level should be encouraged.

Setting international standards

Members believe that it is essential to improve European coordination and engagement at international level in relation to standardisation, with like-minded global partners, while respecting the right of national delegations to reach their own decisions in international forums.

They emphasised that prioritising standardisation matters in cooperation with third countries to ensure that like-minded, inclusive approaches towards standardisation can prevail at international level.

The Commission and the ESOs are called on to engage with international counterparts and like-minded trading partners.

Cutting-edge innovations that foster timely standard-setting

The report stressed the value of commercialisation for research activities, including those launched under the Union's research funding programmes. It recalled that the collaborative nature of Union funded research, including with third-country researchers, may be beneficial to standards development and support not only the creation of standards but also the next generation of experts involved in standardisation activities.

Ensuring future standardisation expertise

Members support the development of awareness-raising and training programmes, including lifelong learning programmes and vocational education and training aimed at developing pathways towards standardisation activities for academics, future industry professionals, policymakers and civil society representatives. They called for training and mentorship programmes to be launched to promote awareness of standards and the benefits of standardisation.