

A standardisation strategy for the Single Market

2022/2058(INI) - 09/05/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 501 votes to 8, with 41 abstentions, a resolution 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

Parliament 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 considered that the fundamental qualities of the standardisation system remain relevant and effective for the proper functioning of the internal market and the competitiveness of European industry. They 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 resolution 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

Parliament supports the launch of the **High-Level Forum** on European Standardisation. This expert group should include a diverse range of stakeholders, including SMEs and consumer organisations, and ensure transparency in its activities. The High-Level Forum may offer input on both strategic and operational levels, in particular in conjunction with the EU excellence hub on standards on technical matters.

Members welcomed the appointment of a chief standardisation officer (CSO) in the Commission. This position and the hub, as a resource, should lead to greater consistency across the Commission in terms of standardisation requests and the timely adoption of standards and legislative provisions with relevance to standardisation. The person holding this oversight function should be an important interlocutor for Parliament, informing it on the Commission's standardisation activities and enabling effective scrutiny on a technical level.

Parliament 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 welcomed the fact that the Commission wishes to **accelerate the steps involved in developing standards**. Delays have occurred in a variety of sectors, leading to difficulties for operators, national authorities and civil society where standards are not available, or to fragmentation where only national standards can be used. Members underlined that public consultation with stakeholders, consensus building, inclusiveness and the proper verification of whether standards satisfy EU legal requirements, in particular in the case of harmonised standards, should prevail over speed.

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.

Parliament 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.

Members recognised the need for a consistent approach towards **common specifications**, in particular as different legislative processes, recalling the importance of linkage between common specifications and existing European and international standards in order to ease compliance, especially for small and medium-sized companies.

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. Where similar viewpoints exist and are also shared with like-minded third-country partners, European policy leadership on standard development can act as a multiplier for European industrial leadership. Members emphasised that prioritising standardisation matters in cooperation with third countries to ensure that like-minded, inclusive approaches towards standardisation can prevail at international level.

Parliament encouraged close European and EU-NATO cooperation regarding harmonisation of standards in the field of defence in order to enhance interoperability.

Cutting-edge innovations that foster timely standard-setting

The resolution 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.