


Procedure file

Basic information	
COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic) 1996/2171(COS)	Procedure completed
Standardisation and information society: the European approach	
Subject 2.10.03 Standardisation, EC/EU standards and trade mark, certification, compliance 3.30.25 International information networks and society, internet	

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs, Industrial Policy		21/11/1996
		PPE RÜBIG Paul	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	JURI Legal Affairs, Citizens' Rights		19/11/1996
		PSE MARTIN David	
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Industry	2001	24/04/1997
	Industry	1953	08/10/1996

Key events			
24/07/1996	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1996)0359	Summary
08/10/1996	Debate in Council	1953	
23/10/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/04/1997	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		
09/06/1997	Vote in committee		Summary
09/06/1997	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0209/1997	
25/06/1997	Debate in Parliament		
26/06/1997	Decision by Parliament	T4-0354/1997	Summary
26/06/1997	End of procedure in Parliament		
21/07/1997	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	1996/2171(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 142
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ECON/4/08168

Documentation gateway					
Non-legislative basic document		COM(1996)0359	24/07/1996	EC	Summary
Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report		CES0099/1997 OJ C 089 19.03.1997, p. 0011	29/01/1997	ESC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0209/1997 OJ C 222 21.07.1997, p. 0003	09/06/1997	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0354/1997 OJ C 222 21.07.1997, p. 0014-0046	26/06/1997	EP	Summary

Standardisation and information society: the European approach

OBJECTIVE : This communication examines how, in the light of the characteristics of the information and communications technology (ICT) market and of the standards process, the best possible conditions can be created for the drawing-up of standards needed for the implementation of the Information Society. **SUBSTANCE:** The Commission points out that the ICT market and standardization in the ICT field have a number of distinctive features which complicate the standards process. Standards have to follow the life-cycles of products or services but, since these cycles are short and becoming shorter, traditional procedures for drawing up standards often prove inappropriate because they are slow. In view of this, the Commission wishes to give preference (via appropriate proposals) to specifications for common use, also known as de facto standards, or publicly available specifications (PAS). Such standards need to be incorporated into Community legislation, in particular on invitations to tender for public contracts. Given the global nature of ICTs, the Commission again stresses the importance of cooperation between regional and international standards bodies. In this connection, the Commission will organize a worldwide conference in February 1997 on Standardization and the Global Information Society to review progress and identify needs for further work. ?

Standardisation and information society: the European approach

The Commission is right to emphasize the critical importance of interoperability for users of ICT products and services in general and of telecommunications networks in particular. At European level, the efforts of the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC) and European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) should reinforce rather than duplicate global standardization activities and ensure that international standards are implemented uniformly throughout the European Economic Area. The Committee accepts the importance of Directive 83/189/EEC in ensuring notification and scrutiny of proposed actions by Member States. It also recognizes that a Community approach to the promotion of standardization through targeted RTD and demonstration and trial projects is indispensable to the implementation of the Information Society. The Committee agrees that the role and importance of ICT technical specifications and standards needs to be communicated not only to industrial management but also to the generality of users and, in particular, consumer and worker interests. The involvement of SMEs in RTD and demonstration projects linked to standardization and related testing and certification procedures is of vital importance for them to reap the competitive benefits of the global information society. The Committee shares the conclusion of the Commission that within the scope of the New Approach Directives, recognition of PAS could be relevant only for the specific purposes of the Telecommunications Terminal Equipment Directive relating to public authority purchasing. It would be consistent with the proposal accordingly to amend this directive for the Community to consider the role of the PAS in its next review of the wider range of procurement directives covering public supplies, public works, public services and the utilities. The Committee agrees that the Member States should have a European-wide mechanism to identify specifications for common application in public procurement in those cases where formal standardization does not offer appropriate solutions. The Committee notes that the Directive 83/189 Standing Committee may provide such a mechanism. ?

Standardisation and information society: the European approach

The committee unanimously adopted the proposal for a resolution on the Commission's communication on standardization on the information and communications technology (ICT) market. While welcoming this step, the rapporteur Mr Rubig (PPE, A), highlighted a number of priority lines of approach, such as the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises and consumers, coordination between the work of national standards bodies, the need to avoid duplicated efforts between CEN, CENELEC and ETSI and the standardization of software products.

Finally, the draft resolution adopted approved the flexible approach taken by the Commission in order to react to the challenge of fast-paced technological evolution in the ICT industries and approved the trend towards "light standards" in this field based on criteria of transparency and openness, especially by applying the concept of publicly available specifications (PAS) in order to prevent distortions of competition, a lack of openness or the abuse of intellectual property rights by the holders of such rights.?

Standardisation and information society: the European approach

In its adoption of the report by Mr Paul RÜBIG (PPE, A), Parliament welcomes the spirit of the Commission communication on 'standardization and the global information society: the European approach', noting its rejection of the temptation of rigid or bureaucratic responses to the evolution of markets and technology. Parliament nonetheless considers it essential to continue efforts to improve the speed and efficiency of the standardization processes, especially in the following fields: involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises and their representatives; involvement of consumers and their representatives; coordination of the work of national standards bodies; avoidance of duplicated efforts between CEN, CENELEC and ETSI; and standardization of software products. While Parliament agrees that a more flexible instrument than a full official standard, as well as a more open procedure, are necessary to respond to the challenge of fast-paced technological evolution, it considers that this kind of instrument cannot be replaced by the indiscriminate use of 'de facto standards', which bear a risk of incompatibility, obsolescence, and creation of unjustified dominant positions. ?