



Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2010/2051(INI)	Procedure completed
Future of European standardisation		
Subject 2.10.03 Standardisation, EC/EU standards and trade mark, certification, compliance 3.40 Industrial policy		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection		08/04/2010
		ECR KOŽUŠNÍK Edvard	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		PPE COMI Lara	
		S&D REPO Mitro	
		ALDE MANDERS Antonius	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	ITRE Industry, Research and Energy		17/03/2010
		Verts/ALE BÜTIKOFER Reinhard	
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs	TAJANI Antonio	

Key events			
22/12/2009	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2009)0690	Summary
21/04/2010	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
29/09/2010	Vote in committee		Summary
07/10/2010	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0276/2010	
18/10/2010	Debate in Parliament		
21/10/2010	Results of vote in Parliament		
21/10/2010	Decision by Parliament	T7-0384/2010	Summary
21/10/2010	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2010/2051(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative

Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	IMCO/7/02721

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		COM(2009)0690	22/12/2009	EC	Summary
Committee opinion	ITRE	PE442.804	15/07/2010	EP	
Committee draft report		PE442.975	09/08/2010	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE448.863	15/09/2010	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0276/2010	07/10/2010	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0384/2010	21/10/2010	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2011)609/3	28/03/2011	EC	

Future of European standardisation

PURPOSE: to report on the application of the procedures laid down by Directive 98/34/EC for standardisation and technical regulations between 2006 and 2008.

CONTENT: this report analyses the application between 2006 and 2008 of the procedures laid down by Directive 98/34/EC for standardisation and technical regulations. It highlights their important contribution to the implementation of better regulation and to the functioning of the single market.

The standardisation part of the report consists of the information procedure on standards, Commission requests to the European Standards Organisations (ESOs) for standardisation work (?mandates?) and formal objections against standards. They have proved to be an important element in the functioning of the single market.

Information procedure: the information procedure has brought transparency in standards and has encouraged National Standards Bodies (NSBs) to continue to take initiatives to promote European harmonisation. The information procedure still plays an important role in encouraging national standardisation bodies to bring their initiatives to European level. Enlargement has led to an increase in notifications from new Member States, which will stabilise and even fall as they become more fully integrated, thus following the trend led by older Member States.

Mandates: mandates have provided the means by which the relationship between the Commission services and standardisers is determined; the interface between the policy level and its technical expression. The process of mandating is well-established, but care must be taken to ensure it continues to operate smoothly. To this end, the informal consultation of all the relevant parties prior to the Committee consultation is essential and should continue. To improve transparency in the functioning of the Committee, the Commission services have from 2006 invited the European standardisation stakeholders, ANEC, ECOS, ETUI and NORMAPME, to participate in its enlarged meeting. For the sake of transparency the services of the Commission will consider the possibility of organising a written procedure inspired by internet forums. The objective will be to ensure that all committee members can read the observations of the other members, rendering this type of consultation similar to that held at the Committee meeting. The process of mandating has proved to be instrumental in enlarging the role of standardisation in new areas of EU legislation and policy. This is also reflected by the fact that a number of new EU legislative acts refer to the Directive.

Formal objections: formal objections have enabled Member States and the Commission to ensure that standards meet the goals of regulation when used for the purposes of ?New Approach? legislation. The latter contain safeguards for cases where a harmonised standard cannot enable products to meet the essential requirements of the directives concerned. When such cases occur, the Member States or the Commission may introduce a formal objection to the standard in question on which the Committee is consulted. Although the process from receiving the objection to issuing of the Decision is quite time-consuming, the procedure in general has worked adequately. In a similar way to the mandates, and for the sake of transparency, the Commission will make decisions on formal objections public in a consolidated way, and make available an updated table of the actions in relation to the formal objections to the Committee at each meeting.

In the technical regulations part of the report, the Commission notes that the notification to the Commission of national technical regulations prior to their adoption has proved to be an effective instrument of prevention of barriers to trade and of cooperation between the Commission and the Member States and among the Member States themselves as well as improving the regulatory framework. Moreover, at the end of 2008, this procedure showed to be useful in preventing the emergence within the internal market of protectionist measures which might have been proposed by Member States in the context of the economic and financial crisis. The notification procedure has also been an important tool for guiding national regulatory activity in emerging sectors and improving the quality of national technical regulations - in terms of increased transparency, readability and effectiveness - in non-harmonised or partly harmonised areas. The greater clarity in the legal framework of each Member State has helped economic operators to reduce the cost of accessing the regulations and applying them correctly.

The report states that the Commission will remain vigilant as regards the principles of better regulation and the need to sustain a favourable environment for the competitiveness of the European economy. Therefore notified drafts continue to be available electronically, free of charge and in all the official languages of the EU. Moreover efforts will continue to provide economic operators with a legal framework that is as clear as possible, will continue to seek to avoid "goldplating" and provide with comments, aiming at enhancing the competitiveness of European enterprises in the EU and abroad, taking into account the links between this procedure and that established by the Agreement on technical barriers to trade (TBT) in the context of the World Trade Organisation

Future of European standardisation

The Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection adopted the own-initiative report drafted by Edvard KOUČEK (ECR, CZ) 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.

The report 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 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.

Members ask 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: Members stress 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.

The report 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;
- 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 Parliament sets out a series of recommendations which aim to:

- Improve access to the standardisation process: Parliament encourages European and national standardisation bodies, therefore, to promote and facilitate effective participation in the standardisation process by all interested parties, in particular representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and all stakeholders representing the public interest such as consumers (including people with disabilities and vulnerable consumers), environmentalists, workers and bodies representing other societal interests.
- Enhance the national delegation principle: the resolution notes that, although National Standards Boards (NSBs) constitute a core element in the European standardisation system, there are significant differences among them in terms of resources, technical expertise and stakeholder engagement in the standardisation process. It stresses that the existing inequalities create a significant imbalance in their effective participation in the European standardisation system. It asks the Commission and the ESOs to promote training programmes and to take all measures needed to enable weaker NSBs to assume a more active role in the standardisation process.
- Facilitate access to standards: Parliament maintains that users' access to European standards developed in support of EU policies and legislation is an important issue that needs to be further examined. It takes the view that different systems of price setting should be considered for private/industrial standards and for harmonised/mandated standards. It calls, in particular, on NSBs to reduce costs through special rates and by offering bundles of standards at a reduced price, and to investigate additional ways of improving access, especially for SMEs.

- Members emphasise that standards should be comprehensible, simple and easy to use so that they can be implemented better by users and it underlines the importance of providing standards in all EU official languages in order to ensure proper understanding by users. The Commission is called upon to further support, and simplify the financial arrangements for, the translation of harmonised standards.

2) Standardisation in support of innovation and sustainable competitiveness: Parliament 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.

The resolution 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.

Parliament 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.

The resolution 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.

Lastly, Parliament urges all the Member States to ratify without delay the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and implement effectively its provisions with regard to the promotion of universal design principles in the standards-setting process.

Future of European standardisation

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;
- revise and rationalise the process to deliver standardisation mandates to ESOs, so as to include a consultation phase with relevant stakeholders;
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- 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.