

Brussels, 22nd June 2010

POSITION ON THE REFORM OF THE EU STANDARDISATION SYSTEM

ICT is critical for the development of EU industry and for European competitiveness

The Digital Agenda for Europe is a critical element for the Europe 2020 strategy to tackle the immediate challenge of the current crisis, to regain competitiveness and to put the EU on an upward path of sustainable growth. The ICT technologies needed for the implementation of the Digital Agenda – high-speed internet, the World Wide Web and related digital technologies for the household and the workplace - are thus essential tools for economic recovery.

ICT domain is a fast developing, highly innovative, highly competitive, global market. The standards needed for their implementation are mainly based on global standards developed by fora and consortia. Consequently effective recognition of relevant ICT fora and consortia standards for direct referencing is critical for the global competitiveness of EU industry and the support to European Policies (e.g. public procurement, innovation, interoperability).

Commissioner Kroes stressed during the Openforum Europe summit that: “*The reform of the European ICT standardisation framework is a simple way to bring relevant standards from the non-traditional standard-setting organisations to an equal footing with European standards when it comes to achieving interoperability*”. Interoperability is a key objective for the ICT domain. It should be realized by using all relevant standards, including those developed by fora or consortia if they are deemed eligible.

An Urgent Implementation of the EU ICT Standardization Policy is critical for EU competitiveness

DG Enterprise (Unit D4) initiated a review of the EU ICT standardization policy in 2006 on the basis of a study, followed by numerous stakeholder meetings and public conferences which concluded in 2009 with the publication of the ICT White Paper¹. The open consultation, via the Commission’s Web site, confirmed the wide support of the proposals included in the White Paper.

DIGITALEUROPE supports the European Commission’s plans for a revision of the EU ICT Standardisation Policy as expressed in that White Paper, most notably those:

- To introduce the list of attributes of eligibility for assessing standards processes and deliverables from fora and consortia;

¹ “Modernising ICT Standardisation in the EU - The Way Forward”: COM(2009) 324

- To implement processes to allow for direct referencing of specifications from fora and consortia in EU policies and public procurement;
- To install a dedicated, multi-stakeholder, ICT standardisation policy platform as an advisory group to the Commission on ICT standardisation.

These proposed changes are of high relevance for the ICT sector and public procurers in Europe. Modern ICT infrastructures and architectures cannot be realized without using and implementing standards from fora and consortia, which are well-established global standardisation structures in the ICT sector. The ICT industry in Europe is developing solutions based on these standards in order to be competitive on the global market places. Within the ICT standardization policy platform the industry stakeholders (both large and small) will represent market realities, innovation and technical evolution while the member states will ensure compliance with public interest and societal expectations.

The implementation of the ICT White Paper recommendations should be done via a Revision of the Council Decision 87/95

DIGITALEUROPE recommends that the revision of Council Decision 87/95 be decoupled from the horizontal review of the European Standardisation System, i.e. the revision of Directive 98/34 and of the Decision on Financing.

Both legal documents are complementary while very different in scope:

- Council Decision 87/95 provides ICT sector specific rules focusing on the implementation and use of existing standards and specifications to ensure interoperability in support of public procurement, and European Policies.
- Directive 98/34 lays down the processes for the development of harmonized European standards to be used in support of regulation and legislation, typically in the context of the New Approach.

DIGITALEUROPE wishes to encourage the European Commission, the European Parliament and the EU Member States to proceed with the implementation of the recommendations of the ICT White Paper via a revision of the Council Decision 87/95 as quickly as possible, and without further delay.

- The recommendations in the ICT White Paper were developed with full transparency and broad stakeholder involvement in the ICT Steering Committee (an advisory committee to the EC);
- The ICT White Paper received wide support in its public consultation, which was reconfirmed in several recent statements in the context of the consultation on the horizontal standardisation system in Europe;
- The Commission has shown strong leadership with the proposals for the ICT reform which is also reconfirmed in the Digital Agenda;

- The legal implementation via the revision of Council Decision 87/95 should now be done as soon as possible without further delay, otherwise the EU will lose credibility and limit its economic and political influence in this space, and there will be negative effects on a number of key aspects of the Digital Agenda that assume the ability to reference fora and consortia deliverables.

ABOUT DIGITALEUROPE

DIGITALEUROPE is the pre-eminent advocacy group of the European digital economy acting on behalf of the information technology, consumer electronics and telecommunications sectors. We are dedicated to improving the business environment, and to promoting industry's contribution to economic growth and social progress in the European Union.

DIGITALEUROPE ensures industry participation in the development and implementation of EU policies. **DIGITALEUROPE's** members include 60 leading corporations and 40 national trade associations from all the Member States of EU; altogether 10,000 companies with 2 million employees and €1,000 billion in revenues. You can learn more about our activities via <http://www.digitaleurope.org>

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