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Standardisation is the process by which specifications are set. The majority of ICT specifications help ensure that products retain the ability to connect with each other, boosting innovation, and keeping ICT markets open and competitive.

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A specification is a document that outlines the agreed properties for a particular product, service, or procedure. In ICT, specifications are primarily used to maximise interoperability – the ability for systems to work together –, which is essential to ensure that markets remain open. This allows consumers to have the widest choice of products possible and gives manufacturers the benefit of economies of scale.

In relation with ICT standardisation, the Commission has launched a public consultation on [Standards in the Digital Single Market: setting priorities and ensuring delivery](#) [2] from 23 September 2015 to 4 January 2016. Public authorities, European Standards Organisations, national regulators, industry associations, fora and consortia, corporations, SMEs and micro companies, civil society organisations, academia and interested citizens are invited to participate and submit their views.

Why is interoperability so important in ICT?

In modern ICT the service value of a device relies on the ability to communicate with other devices. This is known as the network effect. It is important in almost all areas of ICT. Specifications ensure that products made by different manufacturers are able to interoperate, and that users are offered the chance to pick and mix between different suppliers, products or services.

What is the EU's role in standardisation?

The EU supports an effective and coherent standardisation framework, which ensures that high quality standards are developed in a timely manner. The European Commission financially supports the work of European Standardisation Organisations (ETSI, CEN, CENELEC), but does not interfere with the standardisation setting conducted by industry or National Standardisation Organisations. EU

funded research and innovation projects also make their results available to the standardisation work of several standards-setting organisations. Besides, [consultations on general standardisation issues](#) [3] are launched on a periodic basis. [The EU Rolling Plan for ICT Standardisation](#) [4] provides an overview of the activities to be undertaken in support of EU policies.

As part of the [ICT standardisation policy](#) [5], a [European Multi Stakeholders Platform \(MSP\)](#) [6] on ICT standardisation was setup in 2011. The MSP plays the role of advisor and guide on matters relating to ICT standardisation policy and to priority-setting in support of legislation and policies. Furthermore, it advises on identification of ICT technical specifications for use in public procurement elaborated by Global ICT Fora and Consortia, and stimulates a better cooperation between the actors.

A Communication with the Guidelines for avoiding technology lock-ins by [using standards in public procurement](#) [7] was published on 25th June 2013. This will be followed up by [best practices exchanges and dissemination through workshops](#) [8] in 2014 and 2015.

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