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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

The annual Union work programme for European standardisation for 2019

{SWD(2018) 434 final}

1. Introduction

Standards are indispensable instruments for the proper functioning of the single market. They support higher economic growth by removing the barriers that prevent innovative, competitive products and services entering markets and by expanding trade to new markets. Standards improve the compatibility, quality and performance of products and services, offering manufacturers a stable basis for investing in new technologies and the digitisation of processes. Standards also enable manufacturers to manage the transition to low carbon energy resources, engaging in global value chains and add service components to products.

The key to maximising the positive impact of standardisation is to develop synergies inside the European standardisation system, taking into account also the international dimension of standardisation. The synergies need to include SMEs and start-ups, thus strengthening innovation and technology within the internal market.

The Commission is pursuing its overarching objective of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth through actions identified in its annual work programmes. European standards have a major supportive role in many of these actions, as they facilitate the implementation of relevant legislation by offering presumption of conformity to its essential requirements. In addition, standards provide interoperability between a number of sectors like in ICT allowing the development of new technologies, applications and services and supporting European growth and competitiveness.

Beyond the harmonised standards formally requested by the Commission to support a legislative act, there is also a whole set of European standards and European standardisation deliverables developed by the European Standardisation Organisations¹ (ESOs). These standards may not be formally requested, but are still required to support the implementation of Commission policies. This 2019 annual Union work programme for European standardisation (AUWP) identifies some of the main policy areas relevant from this point of view: energy, circular economy, defence, security, the internal market, the digital single market. It sets out the strategic priorities for European standardisation in support of both EU legislation and policies. The AUWP also places these strategic priorities in a broader context of international cooperation on standardisation.

The European standardisation system is based on a unique system of privileged public-private partnership between the Commission and the ESOs reflecting the provisions of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012². The 2019 AUWP defines the key orientations for the future developments of this partnership, including the important principle of inclusiveness.

¹ CEN — European Committee for Standardisation, CENELEC — European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation and ETSI — European Telecommunications Standards Institute

² Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on European standardisation.

Since the adoption of the Communication on European standards for the 21st century³, the Commission has worked closely with its partners from the industry, public authorities, non-governmental organisations and academia to implement the initiatives proposed by the Communication, including a governance cycle strengthening the dialogue with the EU co-legislators and the development of the Joint Initiative on Standardisation⁴ (JIS). The JIS will conclude its work in 2019 and the AUWP proposes areas of focus for its final year of implementation.

This work programme has been prepared with invaluable input from the inter-institutional dialogue, organised in June 2018, which brought together high-level representatives of the standardisation community, industry, the Commission, the European Parliament, the European Economic, the Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and other European standardisation stakeholders

The event was an opportunity to exchange ideas on strategic issues, provide feedback on the Commission standardisation initiatives and openly discuss future policy priorities and ways to strengthen the European Standardisation System. The discussion touched upon a range of subjects including general functioning of the standardisation system, questions about its governance process and the orientation of EU standardisation priorities, all within the broader international context as well. The European education system's contribution to supporting new technologies and delivering a new generation of experts was highlighted as a particularly important aspect. Also the expert group Multi Stakeholder Platform for ICT standardisation (MSP)⁵ and the Rolling Plan for ICT standardisation were praised as a model for cooperative planning and stakeholder engagement.

The Commission explores to continue this format in the future while drawing important lessons from this dialogue. Its outcomes will be used to inform the on-going prioritisation of standardisation work and will feed into internal reflections and preparatory actions ahead of the report on the implementation of the Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012. This report is to be prepared by the Commission and delivered to the European Parliament and to the Council.⁶

2. Strategic priorities for European standardisation in support of Union legislation and policies⁷

2.1. Action in support of the digital single market strategy

Availability of ICT standards and technical specifications, in particular to provide for interoperability between products, services and devices, is critical to achieve all the benefits

³ COM(2018)358

⁴ C(2016) 3211

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/european-multi-stakeholder-platform-ict-standardisation>

⁶ In line with the obligation stipulated by Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 Art. 24.3.

⁷ see the actions in the SWD accompanying this Communication

that the Digital Single Market can deliver. The Commission, in collaboration with European and International Standardisation Organisations and other fora and consortia, as well as with industrial and societal stakeholders, have progressed in all the priority areas and domains identified in the Communication on ICT standardisation priorities for the Digital Single Market⁸, as reported in the Communication on the implementation of EU standardisation policy and contribution of the European standards to EU policies⁹.

Digitisation is driven by the need of individual industries to increase their performance but also by the expectations of their clients and suppliers. It is therefore important to involve not only the providers but also the beneficiaries, including vulnerable and minority groups in society like persons with disabilities, in elaborating ICT standards. Standardisation issues also need to be addressed at EU level in order to ensure due consideration of relevant legislation, such as the EU data protection rules.

The standardisation needs in support of EU policies are outlined in the annually updated rolling plan for ICT standardisation published by the Commission. The 2018 version of the rolling plan for ICT standardisation¹⁰ identifies 170 actions organised around four thematic areas: key enablers, societal challenges, innovation for the single market and sustainable growth.

Creating the right conditions for digital networks and services to flourish is one of the three pillars of the Digital Single Market strategy. Standardisation will support it in 2019 by focusing on Internet of Things, big data, blockchain, cooperative Intelligent Transport Systems & autonomous driving, eHealth, smart cities, accessibility, e-Government and artificial intelligence. Harmonisation in relation to 5G spectrum and availability of the global 5G standards by the end of 2019, as foreseen in the 5G Action Plan, will promote investments in 5G networks and applications.

Cybersecurity requirements should offer parallel protection from cyber-attacks on the software and hardware controlling processes, systems and equipment. The Commission, in its 2017 proposal for the EU Cybersecurity Act Regulation¹¹ has proposed the creation of an EU ICT security certification framework for products and services. Certification schemes will use standards and technical specifications to both express as well as assess conformity to specified cybersecurity requirements.

Blockchain technology supports secure and auditable storage of data and reduces transaction costs bringing about high levels of traceability and security in economic transactions online. Since the system compiles public and private networks, standardisation is needed to provide interoperability between the different configurations of blockchain technology. On 1st February 2018, the Commission launched the EU Blockchain Observatory and Forum, whose

⁸ COM(2016) 176

⁹ COM(2018) 26 and SWD(2018) 15

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/ict-standardisation_en#rolling_plan_ict_standardisation

¹¹ COM(2017)477

Working Group on Blockchain Policy and Framework Conditions will address, among others, issues on technological and ecosystem developments such as interoperability, where standardisation can give solutions. It will also identify any blockchain standardisation needs at EU level¹².

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has a broad impact on the economy and society and in many aspects influences our daily lives. It is necessary to make AI products and services market-ready and ensure compliance with safety standards¹³. The European AI Alliance will be the European reference platform for thinking and reflection on AI. The Commission is setting up a High-Level Expert Group, which will serve as the steering group for the European AI Alliance's work and will assist with the identification of standardisation needs.

2.2. Actions in support of the Energy union and climate

CO₂ emissions reduction targets for all types of vehicles aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector, while ensuring the competitiveness of the sector and leading to fuel savings for consumers. Such targets can also improve the air quality in our cities and benefit the environment. At the same time, they challenge the automotive industry to find ways for reducing fuel consumption. The Commission has set its objectives¹⁴ and the target for standardisation is to provide standards that will facilitate industry in reducing CO₂ by stimulating innovation and improving vehicles' efficiency (e.g aerodynamic performance).

As part of the third mobility package¹⁵, the proposed EU Regulation on tyres labelling¹⁶ aims to contribute to fuel efficiency, safety and noise by providing better information to consumers when they buy tyres. Standards could for example support the development of harmonised performance tests like ice performance to be included on the label giving consumers a fuller picture of the performance of tyres in winter conditions. The proposed Regulation also paves the way for potential inclusion of information on tyre abrasion on the label. Tyre abrasion has been identified as the single-most important source of microplastics pollution, but test methods supporting such a policy measure are lacking.

Finally, standards can be supportive at greening of the shipping sector through the use of alternative fuels (e.g. LNG made of fossil, biomass or power-to-gas technologies, electricity, hydrogen) for waterborne application.

The Commission is expanding the ecodesign requirements to new categories of products: pumps, local space heaters, solid fuel local space heaters, air-heating products, cooling

¹² The Commission is directly engaged in standardisation through a liaison with ISO Technical Committee 307 on blockchain and distributed technologies. It also liaises with CEN's Focus Group on Blockchain and Distributed Ledger Technologies, whose original task is to produce an EU white paper on blockchain standardisation. It will also identify any blockchain standardisation needs at EU level.

¹³ see details in COM(2018) 237

¹⁴ COM(2018)284

¹⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/road/news/2018-05-17-europe-on-the-move-3_en

¹⁶ COM(2018)296

products, high temperature process chillers and fan coil units air conditioning and batteries. In the coming years, standardisation is expected to provide the technical specifications needed to implement these new requirements.

2.3. Action in support of the circular economy action plan

Safer traffic, less polluting vehicles and more advanced technological solutions support the competitiveness of the EU industry while bringing clear benefits to its citizens. The Commission set out a strategic Action Plan¹⁷ for the development and manufacturing of batteries in Europe based on the work of the European Battery Alliance.¹⁸ Specifically, the Plan envisages actions for standardisation to identify the possibility of developing a standardised EU life cycle assessment scheme for batteries. In addition, considerations could be given to the role of ecodesign to put forward sustainability design and use requirements for batteries. In that context, the potential role for European standards for enabling the safe and sustainable production, (re-)use and recycling of batteries will be investigated.

As regards plastics, one of the reasons for the low use of recycled plastics is the misgivings of many product brands and manufacturers, who fear that recycled plastics will not meet their needs for a reliable, high-volume supply of materials with constant quality specifications. With this in mind, the development of quality standards for sorted plastic waste and recycled plastics could facilitate a greater integration of recycling activities into the plastics value chain. Following the identification of standardisation needs¹⁹, the Commission will propose the development of standards addressing the procedural and infrastructure issues for recycling. In addition, the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy identifies the need to develop methods to assess microplastic losses from *inter alia* textile sources. A role for the standardisation bodies in 2019 will be to review and possibly elaborate on test methods pledged by a Cross Industry Agreement²⁰ to assess microplastic release into the aquatic environment during the washing of synthetic textiles.

In its recent proposal for a directive to address the impact of certain plastic products on the environment²¹ the Commission has included a proposal to require that beverage containers can only be placed on the market if the caps and lids are tethered to the containers, as caps and lids are among the most found items. In view of ensuring a good functioning of the internal market after the entry into force of the directive the Commission has also included the development of a harmonised standard in the proposal, which is considered crucial by both Council and the European Parliament.

¹⁷ Annex 2 to COM(2018) 293

¹⁸ The European Battery Alliance (EBA) was launched in October 2017 by Vice President Šefčovič:
https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/policy/european-battery-alliance_en

¹⁹ Results of the currently executed "ancillary and preliminary action on sustainable chemicals" under Grant Agreement n° CEN/000/2017-05 Sustainable Chemicals

²⁰ The Agreement is signed by five industry associations: AISE, CIRFS, EOG, EURATEX and FESI.

²¹ COM(2018) 340

2.4. Action in support of a deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base

Standardisation is an important pre-requisite for a deeper and fairer internal market. The development of key technical standards is highly relevant to ensure the interoperability of the different systems and can largely facilitate the uptake of innovative solutions. The recently adopted Mobility Package to help the transportation sector make a competitive and socially fair transition to clean energy and digitalisation sets out a number of initiatives. For example, vehicles platooning enables a group of self-driving vehicles to move safely by using automated intelligent control systems that are inter-communicative. In this case, a lead vehicle controls the speed and direction of all others and is a promising technology for making our roads safer and transport more efficient. Standardisation should support the implementation of the proposed EU Regulation²² by providing technical specification solving the inter-connection and interoperability needs of the system. In parallel, the Commission will work to address²³ the issues of spectrum to support radio access technologies for connected and automated mobility in the 5.9 GHz band.

To ensure safe driving conditions in the EU territory there has to be convergence in the design, building and management of road infrastructure. Standards could foster harmonisation and knowledge sharing between Member States on the respected procedures and requirements.

In addition, for better safety, removal of technical barriers and rapid deployment of innovation, focus will continue to be on setting new technical specifications for interoperability relating to the infrastructure and rolling stock subsystems of the rail system.

The completion of the core network and corridors of the Trans-European Network for Transport (TEN-T) will increase transport capacity in the internal market without increasing CO₂ emissions. Standardisation could support solutions to ensure interoperability and communication between the network's electronic systems.

In combination with electronic invoicing, electronic freight transport information will make the logistics sector more efficient. On electronic freight transport information, standards should make the elaboration of a uniform approach to the acceptance of electronic documents easier.

The Commission will also request an update of the standards needed for inspection and testing of dangerous goods transported across Member states.

²² COM(2018)286

²³ see details in COM(2018)283

2.5. Action in support of the European defence action plan

The European defence market suffers from fragmentation and insufficient industrial collaboration. Therefore, one of the three measures announced in the Defence Action Plan²⁴ is to ensure an open and competitive EU single market for defence. European standardisation has a proven track record in supporting openness and competition in the internal market. The Commission has proposed to the European Defence Agency to start developing an action plan for standardisation in the defence area in collaboration with the ESOs.

2.6. Action in support of the of the space strategy for Europe

Deployment of the Galileo system is to be completed by 2020, in parallel to the exploitation phase (started in 2017). This means that by that time the Space Segment will have been fully deployed and all services declared fully operational. The Commission has proposed to the European Global Navigation Satellite Systems Agency to start developing an action plan for standardisation in the area in collaboration with the ESOs.

2.7. Action in support of the European agenda on security

In order to deal with the new security challenges, the EU is funding research activities to advance the security technologies at European level. The EU security industrial base is in a strong position to deliver needed solutions. However, this industry has to overcome the existing fragmentation for the wide uptake of EU funded research outcomes. Standards could bridge this gap. They can offer economies of scale and reduce the information asymmetries between the supply and the demand sides, with cross-border transactions.

3. International cooperation

Supporting the competitive position of EU industry in the global value chain and strengthening its presence in international markets are key conditions for creating jobs and growth in Europe, particularly in view of the changing dynamic in the international trade policies²⁵.

These objectives can primarily be achieved by aiming for the greatest possible coherence between international and European standards, and by promoting the general use of European and/or international standards outside the EU.

In 2019, the Commission will continue to intensify its policy dialogue with international standardisation bodies and pursue its participation in relevant international fora²⁶. The

²⁴ COM(2016) 950

²⁵ The implications of the changing international dynamics for policy involvement from the Commission (e.g. Industrial policy) were among the topics discussed by the June 2018 inter-institutional dialogue on standardisation.

²⁶ Such as the World Trade Organisation and United Nations Committees.

Commission will also liaise with international standardisation organisations such as ISO/IEC/JTC1/ITU-T and when relevant follow-up its technical committees.

The Commission will also promote European standardisation and contribute to chapters on Technical Barriers to Trade when negotiating, elaborating and implementing various international policy actions, such as Free-Trade Agreements²⁷, the EU/Ukraine Association Agreement²⁸, Eastern Partnership²⁹, EU/African Renewed Partnership³⁰ and the Europe/Asia Connectivity process³¹.

The Commission will launch a dialogue on standards with the United States in order to ease trade, reduce bureaucratic obstacles, and slash costs³².

Similarly, the Commission will ensure continuity of visibility projects, such as the current schemes for seconded European standardisation experts in China and India, and the web-based standardisation platform with China³³ and the projects related to international cooperation on ICT standardisation³⁴. The overall objective of such actions is to present the European Standardisation System as an attractive alternative to other regional or national standardisation arrangements, provide standardisation-relevant intelligence and facilitate bilateral cooperation on standardisation matters.

In addition, the actions will support European companies having difficulty gaining access to non-EU markets because of standardisation issues. The Commission is planning to renew the current project in India from mid-2019 until 2022. The Commission will support the organisation of 3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) meetings in Europe in order to facilitate the active participation of a broad range of European delegates, from key industrial players, including SMEs, academia and research institutions.

4. Public-private partnership

4.1. Governance

A timely delivery of high-quality standards requires continuous cooperation and trust building between both sides of the public-private partnership of European standardisation.

In particular, the quality of the harmonised standards, which provide presumption of conformity, require specific attention from both sides. That type of standard must meet the recent jurisprudence in this regard, comply with the European Standardisation Regulation and

²⁷ <http://ec.europa.eu/trade/policy/countries-and-regions/negotiations-and-agreements/>

²⁸ OJ L 161, 29.5.2014, p. 3–2137

²⁹ The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a joint initiative involving the EU, its Member States and six Eastern European Partners: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

³⁰ COM(2017) 763 final

³¹ JOIN(2018) 31

³² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-18-4687_en.htm

³³ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/cesip/>

³⁴ www.indico-ictstandards.eu; www.standict.eu

fulfil the legal requirements of the sectorial legislation it covers. Following that recent jurisprudence, the Commission will continue to reassess its procedures and share them with the stakeholders through the Joint Initiative on Standardisation launched in 2016 and through the Action Plan on referencing harmonised standards that was agreed between the Commission and the ESOs in 2017³⁵. The ESOs are invited to give the highest priority to addressing the non-referenced harmonised standards in order to meet the high-quality standards required by the market and the legislator and to ensure a timely referencing in the OJEU.

To implement that Action Plan, in 2019 the Commission will focus on further consolidating the new system of consultants on harmonised standards that was implemented in 2018. The system was set up to verify and assess the quality of draft-harmonised standards and their conformity to the corresponding Union legislation and policies.

The Commission will continue to support the governance process through its regular structural dialogues with the ESOs. This is proving to be a useful framework for the early resolution of obstacles and the effective implementation of agreed actions.

4.2. *Inclusiveness*

The Commission reiterates its invitation to ESOs, national standardisation bodies³⁶ and Annex III organisations (SBS, ANEC, ETUC and ECOS)³⁷ to continue their efforts to ensure stakeholder participation and to step up their cooperation, if necessary by adapting their internal rules and procedures.

The Commission intends to demonstrate the favourable impact of inclusiveness on the quality of European standardisation and its ability to achieve state-of-the-art deliverables, capable of boosting business competitiveness while taking into account the needs of small businesses and civil society. The Commission will therefore ask SBS, representing small businesses in European standardisation, to provide concrete examples demonstrating how SME participation in standardisation creates added value by increasing competitiveness. Similarly, the organisations representing the environmental interests and the interests of consumers and workers in standardisation (ANEC, ETUC and ECOS) should provide examples illustrating how their involvement in standardisation benefits broader society. Such examples may set benchmarks and best practices that other organisations may follow.

Additionally, it would be useful if Annex III organisations enhanced and highlighted the connection they have with their constituencies in different Member States. It is important for their national members to see the advantages of Annex III organisations engaging in European standardisation and to boost the legitimacy of these organisations.

³⁵ See Action Plan in SWD(2018)15

³⁶ National standard bodies in the meaning of Art 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012

³⁷ [Small Business Standards](#), [the European consumer voice in standardisation](#), [the European Trade Union Confederation](#) and [the European Environmental Citizens' Organisation for Standardisation](#)

The ESOs should also report cases where the participation of underrepresented stakeholders, in particular Annex III organisations, has benefited the European standardisation system and the way it operates.

The Commission will continue addressing inclusiveness and related challenges in its bilateral dialogue with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC).

4.3. Evaluation of the Regulation

Article 24(3) of the Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 on European standardisation stipulates that by 31 December 2015, and every 5 years after that, the Commission will present a report to the European Parliament and to the Council on the implementation of this Regulation.

In this context, the Commission will launch an independent review of the European standardisation system in 2019 to evaluate its performance. The independent review will build on the outcome of the Joint initiative on standardisation and possibly on the results of the study on the impact of standardisation.

4.4. Financing European standardisation

The current Framework Partnership Agreements with CEN, CENELEC and ETSI, which provide the legal framework for Union funding of European standardisation, will end in December 2020. To reduce the administration for the European Standardisation Organisations and enable all national standardisation bodies to participate in the development of standards, the Commission will assess potential new measures to simplify the financing of European standardisation by extending the use of lump sums to all forms of grants. To calculate the scales of unit costs and lump sums, the Commission will ask the ESOs to submit their methodology, statistics and audit certificates.

In addition, in view of the next framework partnership agreements which follow the timeline of the next multi-annual financial framework (MFF 2021-2027), the Commission will explore ways, with the ESOs and Annex III organisations, how to best define updated key performance indicators (KPIs) and their implementation for their respective activities. The negotiations for the next framework partnership agreements will start in 2019.

5. Delivering on the Joint initiative on standardisation (JIS)

The Joint initiative on standardisation operates under a joint vision for standardisation that is based on mutually agreed underlying principles. Since its signing in June 2016, the initiative has been driven by stakeholders and facilitated by the Commission and will in principle,

conclude its work in 2019. For that, the Commission will therefore analyse the deliverables tabled. These fall into three categories:

1. Awareness, education and understanding about the European standardisation system;
2. Coordination, cooperation, transparency and inclusiveness;
3. Competitiveness and international dimension.

5.1. Study on the economic and societal impact of standardisation

Standards play a vital albeit sometimes an invisible part in supporting economic growth through their role in boosting productivity, competitiveness and innovation and societal welfare. In addition, the impact of standards within businesses and their supply chains are less well understood. The same applies for the public sector, which is not always aware and informed of the impact of using standards in public policies.

Therefore, following the invitation from the Council and in line with the Joint initiative on standardisation, the Commission is preparing a study on the economic and societal impacts of standardisation in the EU. The tendering process as a precursor to the launch of the study is planned in 2018 and is supported by a feasibility study that was launched in 2017.