New approach to enable global leadership of EU standards promoting values and a resilient, green and digital Single Market

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Today, the Commission is presenting a new Standardisation Strategy outlining our approach to standards within the Single Market as well as globally. The Strategy is accompanied by a proposal for an amendment to the Regulation on standardisation, a report on its implementation, and the 2022 annual Union work programme for European standardisation. This new Strategy aims to strengthen the EU's global competitiveness, to enable a resilient, green and digital economy and to enshrine democratic values in technology applications.

Standards are the silent foundation of the EU Single Market and global competitiveness. They help manufacturers ensure the interoperability of products and services, reduce costs, improve safety and foster innovation. Standards are an invisible but fundamental part of our daily life: from Wi-Fi frequencies, to connected toys or ski bindings, just to mention a few. Standards give confidence that a product or a service is fit for purpose, is safe and will not harm people or the environment. Compliance with harmonised standards guarantees that products are in line with EU law.

The fast pace of innovation, our green and digital ambitions and the implications of technological standards for our EU democratic values require an increasingly strategic approach to standardisation. The EU's ambitions towards a climate neutral, resilient and circular economy cannot be delivered without European standards. Having a strong global footprint in standardisation activities and leading the work in key international fora and institutions will be essential for the EU to remain a global standard-setter. By setting global standards, the EU exports its values while providing EU companies with an important first-mover advantage.

Executive Vice-President for a Europe Fit for the Digital Age, Margrethe **Vestager**, said: *"Ensuring that data is protected in artificial intelligence or ensuring that mobile devices are secure from hacking, rely on standards and must be in line with EU democratic values. In the same way, we need standards for the roll-out of important investment projects, like hydrogen or batteries, and to valorise innovation investment by providing EU companies with an important first-mover advantage."*

Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry **Breton**, said: *"Technical standards are of strategic importance. Europe's technological sovereignty, ability to reduce dependencies and protection of EU values will rely on our ability to be a global standard-setter. With today's Strategy, we are crystal-clear on our standardisation priorities and create the conditions for European standards to become global benchmarks. We take action to preserve the integrity of the European standardisation process, putting European SMEs and the European interest at the centre".*

The Strategy presented today proposes five key sets of actions:

1. **Anticipate, prioritise and address standardisation needs in strategic areas:** we need standards faster and in tune with the European innovation and policy agenda. The Commission has identified standardisation urgencies as regards COVID-19 vaccine and medicine production, critical raw materials recycling, the clean hydrogen value chain, low-carbon cement, chips certification and data standards. As of this year, standardisation priorities will be clearly identified in the 2022 annual Union work programme for European standardisation. A High-level Forum will be set up to inform future standardisation priorities. The Commission will establish the function of a Chief Standardisation Officer to ensure high-level guidance across the Commission on standardisation activities, which will be supported by an EU excellence hub on standards composed of Commission services.

2. **Improve the governance and integrity of the European standardisation system:** European standards, which support EU policy and legislation, must be decided by European players. The Commission is proposing an amendment to the Regulation on standardisation to improve the governance in the European standardisation system. While the European system will remain open, transparent, inclusive and impartial, the proposal prescribes that mandates at the request of the Commission to the European standardisation organisations must be handled

by national delegates – the national standardisation bodies – from the EU and EEA Member States. This will avoid any undue influence of actors from outside the EU and EEA in the decision-making processes during the development of standards for key areas, like cybersecurity or hydrogen standards. The Commission will further pay close attention to the inclusiveness of the system, the role of SMEs and civil society. It calls on the European standardisation organisations to modernise their governance structures and will launch a peer review process among Member States and national standardisation bodies to achieve better inclusiveness for civil society, users and SMEs-friendly conditions for standardisation. At the same time, the Commission will launch the evaluation of the Regulation on standardisation.

3. **Enhance European leadership in global standards:** the Commission will work through the High-Level Forum to set up a new mechanism with EU Member States and national standardisation bodies to share information, coordinate and strengthen the European approach to international standardisation. The Commission will also pursue more coordination between EU Member States and like-minded partners. The EU will fund standardisation projects in African and the Neighbourhood countries.

4. **Support innovation:** the Commission is proposing to better tap into the potential of EU-funded research to valorise innovation projects through standardisation activities and anticipate early standardisation needs. A 'standardisation booster' to support researchers under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe to test the relevance of their results for standardisation, will be launched. The development of a Code of Practice for researchers on standardisation will be initiated to strengthen the link between standardisation and research/innovation through the European Research Area (ERA), by mid-2022.

5. **Enable the next generation of standardisation experts**: standards rely on the best experts and Europe is facing a generation shift. The Commission will promote more academic awareness on standards, for instance through the future organisation of EU University Days and training of researchers.

Background

Today, standards have become a matter of global importance. Other regions are reinforcing their global footprint by being more strategic and assertive. The European standardisation system needs to evolve to respond to these challenges. The Commission's plans for a new Standardisation Strategy and legislative adjustment to the standardisation Regulation were announced in the Commission's 'Updating the 2020 New Industrial Strategy: Building a stronger Single Market for Europe's recovery'.

A harmonised standard is a European standard developed by a recognised European Standards Organisation (CEN, CENELEC or ETSI) following a request from the European Commission. Once accepted, these standards become part of EU law and provide manufacturers using them across the Single Market with a presumption of conformity with the requirements of EU legislation, helping to reduce costs for small businesses. The process is based on a public-private-partnership between the Commission and the standardisation community, where the division of roles and responsibilities is guided by the 2012 standardisation Regulation.

For More Information

Questions and Answers on the EU Strategy on Standardisation

Factsheet on the EU Strategy on Standardisation

An EU Strategy on Standardisation: Setting global standards in support of a resilient, green and digital EU Single Market

Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL amending Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 as regards the decisions of European standardisation organisations concerning European standards and European standardisation deliverables

Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 from 2015 to 2020

The 2022 annual Union work programme for European standardisation

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Press contacts:

Sonya GOSPODINOVA (+32 2 296 69 53)
Federica MICCOLI (+32 2 295 83 00)

General public inquiries: Europe Direct by phone 00 800 67 89 10 11 or by email

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