

**COMMUNICATION**

**from the European Affairs Committee of the Federal Council  
to the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament  
pursuant to Art. 23f (4) of the Austrian Constitution  
15 November 2016**

**COM (2016) 358 final**

**Standardisation Package / Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions / European Standards for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

European standardisation provides a platform for the elaboration of non-binding, technical specifications in various policy areas of relevance to the internal market and, thus, serves to advance the internal market strategy of the European Union. Single market integration is to contribute to innovation and the creation of employment in the European Union. The standardisation package presented comprises the Communications from the Commission on COM 358, COM 357, COM 176 and COM 212, as well as the related supporting documents, and aims at engaging numerous relevant stakeholders. Standards have proven to be an effective way of raising quality and safety in many sectors, from trade in goods to communication technology. Consumers as well as economic operators benefit from standards, especially if they are harmonised.

In its Communication COM 358, the Commission points out that the average time required for the development of a European standard is 36 months. In view of technological developments and, above all, the pace of technological change, the time taken for the creation of harmonised standards is too long. As stated by the Commission, the pace at which high-quality standards are elaborated, involving all stakeholders, has to be aligned with the pace of technological change. The Commission aims at halving the time for the development of European standards by 2020. The Federal Council welcomes and supports these efforts made by the standardisation community with a view to the timely delivery of harmonised standards.

Some of the measures proposed in the Communication from the European Commission are based on voluntary self-commitment and are therefore welcomed by the Federal Council. The voluntary application of standards is to be laid down as a fundamental principle in the European regulatory regime for services. However, the Federal Council wishes to point out that existing national regulatory regimes – based on laws or regulations – should not be undermined, especially in the fields of professional qualifications and health. Excessive regulation or the adoption of standards that are lower than those applicable in Austria must be avoided. To find the right measure, the steps taken have to be well coordinated between the Member States, the European Commission and the European standardisation institutions.