



Commission acts to make standardisation in the Single Market more efficient

Brussels, 22 November 2018

Today the European Commission presents an action plan to enhance efficiency, transparency and legal certainty in the development of harmonised standards for a fully functioning Single Market.

Largely voluntary and industry-driven standards - from the A4 paper size to 5G technology via airbags - reduce costs, promote innovation, ensure interoperability between different devices and services, and help companies to access markets. The EU has harmonised standards in a range of areas such as chemicals, construction products, cosmetics, toy safety, medical devices and packaging. With the actions presented today, the Commission responds to the demands of stakeholders and acts to ensure that the European standardisation system meets the challenges of rapidly evolving technological developments, emerging economic trends and growth models while promoting synergies with international and global standards.

Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: *"Standards are often seen as a technical issue, but their important economic impact and benefits are felt by companies and consumers in the Single Market every day. A well-functioning standardisation system will help Europe to keep its first mover advantage and keep pace with changes and opportunities in the Internet of Things, big data, advanced manufacturing, robotics, 3D printing, blockchain technologies and artificial intelligence. At the same time, we want to make sure our standards guarantee a high level of safety, health, consumer and environmental protection to protect European citizens."*

The Communication provides an overview of the functioning of the European standardisation system, takes stock of the initiatives launched in recent years and presents four key actions that the Commission will immediately undertake to enhance the efficiency, transparency and legal certainty for the actors involved in the development of harmonised standards:

- Eliminate, as rapidly as possible, the remaining **backlog of harmonised standards** that are not yet published in the Official Journal of the European Union,
- **Streamline internal decision making processes**, in particular the decision of publishing the references to harmonised standards in the Official Journal,
- Elaborate a **guidance document** on practical aspects of implementing the Standardisation Regulation,
- Reinforce, on an on-going basis, the **system of consultants** to support swift and robust assessments of harmonised standards and timely publication in the Official Journal.

The Commission will continue to work with all relevant partners to ensure the continued success of European standardisation as a cornerstone of a fully functioning Single Market.

The action plan goes hand in hand with today's [Communication on the Single Market](#) and the [Communication on a better investment environment in Europe](#), which provide a fresh assessment of the remaining barriers and opportunities for a fully functioning Single Market.

Background

European standards replace potentially conflicting national standards in all Member States of the Union and so, facilitate access to the Single Market for those that use them. In this way standards contribute to a continuous deepening of the Single Market. By promoting a close alignment of European and international standards, the European Union also exports best practices and increases synergies in global value chains. This enhances trade flows and opportunities for European businesses to scale up their activities.

A harmonised standard is a European standard developed by a recognised European Standards Organisation following a request from the European Commission. These standards become part of EU law and, when used, provide manufacturers across the Single Market with a presumption of conformity with the requirements of EU legislation. This in turn provides important legal certainty to users while allowing small and medium-sized enterprises in particular to place products in compliance with EU

legislation on the market without additional costs.

The European standardisation system is based on a public-private-partnership between the Commission and the standardisation community. The Standardisation Regulation, which came into force in 2013, introduced a new division of roles and responsibilities of the actors in the system. It also provides a strong framework for inclusiveness requirements, allowing interests of small and medium-sized enterprises, consumers and workers, as well as environmental interests to be taken into consideration in the standardisation process.

The Commission is entrusted with the responsibility for the assessment of European harmonised standards. It also needs to ensure that these standards are compatible with the requirements of the relevant harmonised Union legislation. The case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union has confirmed the importance of this responsibility and highlighted its legal implications.

More information

[Communication on Harmonised Standards](#)

Press Release: [The Single Market: Europe's best asset in a changing world](#)

Press Release: The Juncker Plan at work: bringing investment back on track in Europe

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Press contacts:

[Lucia CAUDET](#) (+32 2 295 61 82)

[Mirna TALKO](#) (+32 2 298 72 78)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)