



European standards for the 21st century

EP Breakfast Debate

7 February 2017

Standards are not only key to trade in the Single Market for goods but contribute to consumer confidence and protection. Of course, if European standards are to reflect consumer needs, their development process needs to reflect consumer interests. A core value of Regulation (EU) 1025/2012 is its requirement for inclusiveness, and we welcome the aid it gives to ANEC as the voice of consumers in standardisation.

We also welcome the steps CEN and CENELEC have taken to strengthen the voice of societal stakeholders in the adoption of European Standards through introduction of the Opinion, and are very encouraged by recent discussions in ETSI that take into account the special challenges faced by weaker stakeholders. Nevertheless, we still find barriers to participation at national level, and look to Member States to respond to JIS Action 10 and ensure the political and financial frameworks needed at national level to encourage inclusiveness.

Moreover, we still sense a tension between the push for international standards from the business perspective, and the expectation of the public interest for the levels of protection and welfare achieved within Europe not to be lost.

So we think it right that Mrs Mizzi's draft report still has a focus on inclusiveness. It is still not a "done deal".

We support the draft report in its endorsement of the Commission wish to see more European standards for services to consumers in order to build consumer trust. But the lack of an overarching European legal framework for the quality, safety & liability of services remains critical. Without such a harmonising framework, European standards will not be able to provide a level-playing field as national regulations will continue to take precedence, leading to legal uncertainty as well as producer and consumer detriment. More and more service provision is cross-border, with most consumers believing the rules on safety are the same across the EU. Unfortunately, that is not true, and many service providers do not take the needs and expectations of consumers and users into account.



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Raising standards for consumers

Looking a little beyond standardisation, but keeping to the themes of the Single Market Strategy, we still have the problem of market surveillance & enforcement. Non-compliant products are often not only unsafe, but discriminate against those economic operators who do follow the rules. As the proposed Market Surveillance Regulation appears lost in the Council due to its unfortunate association with the Consumer Product Safety Regulation – and its infamous requirement for a mark of origin - we urge the Commission to withdraw the Product Safety Package and come forward with a fresh initiative.

It cannot be right that the European systems of product legislation & standardisation remain enforced by a fragmented model of national market surveillance, one that is also woefully under-resourced, even before we consider online sales.

No matter how the European Standardisation System is made more inclusive or otherwise improved, it will be for nothing if we do not act against non-compliance.

Stephen RUSSELL

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ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, open to representation of the national consumer interest in 34 countries (those countries holding full membership of CEN-CENELEC). Its volunteer experts participate in about 130 technical bodies of CEN, CENELEC & ETSI, and about 25 technical bodies of ISO & IEC. ANEC also represents the collective consumer voice in the development of European public policies and legislation that may use European standards to support their implementation, and in issues related to conformity assessment, accreditation, market surveillance & enforcement. It is an "Annex III Organisation", supported by the EU (& EFTA) under Regulation (EU) 1025/2012.

A N E C - The European Consumer Voice in Standardisation

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