



The European Consumer Voice in Standardisation, AISBL

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High-Level Forum on Standardisation Second meeting – 30 November 2023

EU leadership in international standardisation ANEC intervention – Dermott Jewell (ANEC President)

As the European consumer voice in standardisation, ANEC welcomes the opportunity for debate raised by the discussion paper from Denmark. We agree wholeheartedly that, without the New Approach and New Legislative Framework, the Single Market would not be possible, nor the benefits it has brought to business and consumers. Nevertheless we should remark that it is through the efforts of all stakeholders – and not only industry – that the supporting standards have been written. Indeed, it is this inclusiveness of the European process that leads me to my central point.

The standardisation process at international level – in ISO and IEC – is **not** inclusive. According to figures from ISO itself in 2019, **over 99%** of its standards-writing bodies did not feature consumer participation. Of course, not all ISO work is relevant to consumers but we think this statistic is more than illustrative. Hence we are nervous about standards being developed at the international level, especially when those standards are intended to be adopted as harmonised standards in Europe, remembering 54% of EU GDP is derived from consumer spending. Our concern applies whether the standards are intended to be developed directly in ISO/IEC, or through a form of bilateral preparation as the Danish paper sets out.

But is it a real or imagined problem on behalf of the consumer movement? Well, history demonstrates it has been a real problem in the past.

The first generation of IEC standards for domestic electrical appliances – over 100 standards covering all sorts of everyday products, from electric toothbrushes to ovens and vacuum cleaners – did not take into account use of these appliances by vulnerable consumers – children, older people and persons with disabilities – except under the supervision of others. This was not only discriminatory but failed to reflect real living conditions. Nevertheless, with the close relationship between IEC and CENELEC, these standards were adopted as European standards and harmonised under the Low Voltage Directive. It was ANEC with the support of the Commission - and then the European industry - that championed the revision of these standards in CENELEC, an enormous work to ensure the requirements of the standards met the needs of all consumers.



ANEC is supported financially by the European Union & EFTA

EU Transparency Register No. 507800799-30

Raising standards for consumers



But after many years of work, we can celebrate **millions** of electrical products sold annually in Europe now being safer and more accessible for all. Not only that, but we are promoting the revisions in IEC with a view to consumers around the world also benefitting from what we have achieved in Europe.

Although far from wanting to put an obstacle in the desire of industry for “one standard, one test, accepted everywhere”, we believe the Commission needs to be sensitive as to whether particular harmonised standards are to be written within the European process or the international process, taking into account the advice of its expert fora, including this Forum. Perhaps we should have the aspiration to develop global standards within Europe, using our advantage to implement one European standard as an identical national standard in 34 countries, rather than seeking to find uncertain solutions on the international stage.

Thank you, Commissioner.

ANEC in Brief

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, defending the collective consumer interest in the development of (technical) standards and use of standards, as well as in related legislation and public policies.

ANEC was established in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and is open to the representation of consumers in 34 countries. Its core mission is funded by the EU and EFTA, with national consumer organisations contributing in kind.

The ANEC Secretariat is based in Brussels.

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