



## **MAKING STANDARDS SERVE SOCIETY**

EXPLORING HOW STANDARDS CAN BETTER REFLECT THE NEEDS OF  
CONSUMERS, WORKERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT



CONFERENCE REPORT  
13 OCTOBER 2016, BRUSSELS



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## Executive summary

Product safety, climate change, resource and energy efficiency, sustainable chemistry, workers' protection. . .

The increasing use of standards in European legislation and policies in areas of public interest makes the participation of societal stakeholders more crucial than ever to ensure that standards are robust and able to serve the interests of both industry and society. It remains that standardisation is characterised by the paradox of the huge minorities: societal stakeholders representing millions of consumers, workers, and the environment in Europe are in the minority in standardisation committees, if represented at all.

While Regulation (EU) 1025/2012 on European standardisation paved the way for a more inclusive European Standardisation System (ESS), limited changes have taken place since its entry into force in 2013. The organisation of the first joint conference of societal stakeholders recognised under Annex III of Regulation (EU) 1025/2012 thus provided an opportunity to discuss possible solutions and improvements towards a more inclusive European Standardisation System in order to make standards serve society.

Drawing on the challenges and potential solutions highlighted during the conference, ANEC, ECOS, and ETUC call for an inclusive and transparent ESS to be achieved by means of:

- **Political and financial support at national level and free-of-charge participation** for stakeholders without commercial interests in order to strengthen the consensus behind the national delegation principle at the roots of the ESS.
- **Creation and implementation of a separate (membership) category for societal stakeholders** in order to increase their visibility, rights, and roles in the ESS.
- **Development of a separate standards production line** to avoid domination of one specific group and to allow consensus building at national and European level according to distinct types of stakeholders for standards in areas of great public interest (e.g. the development process used for ISO 26000 on social responsibility).
- **Development of Memorandums of Understanding** between the European Standardisation Organisations and their international counterparts to facilitate the participation and influence of European societal stakeholders at international level.



## Context and purpose of the conference

On 13 October 2016, the eve of World Standards Day, ANEC, ECOS, and ETUC hosted a conference which explored how the interconnected system of European regulation and standards needs to change if standards are to serve society better. This was the first event co-organised by the three European representative associations of societal stakeholders recognised under Annex III of Regulation (EU) 1025/2012.

The conference, held at the Renaissance Hotel in Brussels, brought together over 60 participants from the European institutions, the standardisation community and economic & societal interests to examine the degree to which European standards meet the needs of civil society, including the support standards provide to legislation and also to policies of public interest. With standards increasingly used to support – or sometimes even replace – regulation, it is crucial to ensure that societal stakeholders are fully represented and have the ability to contribute to the standardisation process most effectively. The conference thus provided an excellent opportunity to address the challenges faced by societal stakeholders in the European Standardisation System.

The conference featured two panel discussions. The first panel took stock of first-hand knowledge and experiences of representatives of civil society involved in standard-writing activities in order to highlight the challenges faced by underrepresented stakeholders in standardisation. Reflecting on and taking forward the discussions of the first panel, the second panel focused on possible solutions to make the European Standardisation System more inclusive in order to ensure standards truly serve the interests of society, alongside economic interests. Here, the panellists shared their views on how the standardisation system can be improved, discussing which solutions can best allow a sustainable, effective representation and a proper influence of civil society in standardisation.

This conference report provides a summary of the opening speech, panel presentations and discussions as well as concluding remarks. Video recordings of the conference can be found [here](#).





## Opening speech

**Józef Niemiec**, ETUC Special Advisor

Standards are important for consumers, workers and for the protection of the environment. Although, standardisation should not become the preferred option when addressing issues of public interest, it has increasingly become a policy tool, often used as soft regulation by different policy makers. This is why it is ever more important for Societal Stakeholders to participate in the standardisation process.

Although there has been some progress at the European level to better guarantee the effective participation of Societal Stakeholders in the standardisation process, in particular with the Regulation on Standardisation 1025/2012, a lot remains to be done.

The joint ANEC-ECOS-ETUC conference is an opportunity to address the challenges faced by underrepresented stakeholders in standardisation and explore the possible solutions for a more inclusive system.

## Panel 1: The challenges of using standards in regulation for society



**Franz Fiala**, Chair of the ANEC Sustainability Working Group and Chair of the Consumer Council of the Austrian Standards Institute

There are significant gaps between societal needs and the current regulatory instruments, for example in chemicals-related policy. Standardisation is often seen as a possible gap-filler but there are important limitations to this, as standardisation is an industry-biased process. Although

more prescriptive mandates are definitely needed, some progress has been made in a few areas.

Additionally, if we are to discuss the use of standards, it is important to take into account the structure of the standardisation system, which at the moment does not facilitate the participation of non-industrial stakeholders.

**Catriona McAlister**, ECOS Expert, Sea Green Tree Consulting

Society, in terms of consumers, workers, and the environment, is not well-represented in standardisation. There is a lack of transparency and inclusiveness in the current standardisation process, which is today largely manipulated by industry. The views of Societal Stakeholders, when they are able to participate, are often not taken on board or are side-lined.



Some solutions to a more effective participation need to be taken forward, such as a separate membership category for Societal Stakeholders, free participation, as well as voting rights, and rights to appeal.

**Bruno Melckmans**, ETUC Expert, Board member of the Belgian Bureau for Standardisation (NBN), Advisor for Standardisation & Health and Safety at ABVV-FGTB

Mr. Melckmans reviewed the very important work carried out by trade unions in standardisation. Consumers, environmental NGOs, and trade unions are in the paradox of the larger minority. Indeed, they represent millions of consumers, workers, and employees in Europe and yet they are the minority in the standardisation process.

**Sebastiano Toffaletti**, European Digital SME Alliance, SBS Sectoral Expert

SMEs, like Societal Stakeholders, are an underrepresented group in standardisation. Often the current standardisation system ends up creating a regulatory environment too burdensome for smaller companies to participate in. However, SME-friendly standards can ensure a better society.

#### **Panel discussions:**

The Standardisation Regulation is aiming at a more agile standardisation system. But there is a balance to be reached between a more agile system, which has perhaps fewer rules, and a process with rules that protect all the stakeholders involved. It will be interesting to see how this develops.

Also, in order for Societal Stakeholders to participate in the system, the proper expertise is required. In addition to technical expertise, representatives from Societal Stakeholders need to know and understand how the standardisation system works. This requires time and resources to make participation more effective and is a key challenge.

## **Panel 2: Paving the way for a more inclusive standardisation system**

**Marlene Mizzi**, MEP, Member of the IMCO Committee



The conclusions of the implementation report on the Standardisation Regulation showed that there are still difficulties for organisations representing consumers, workers, and environmental interests to be involved in the standardisation process. It is now important to find solutions. This conference is a platform for the exchange of ideas, information and practices to be taken into account in the Standardisation Report. It is an opportunity to discuss what needs to be improved and what needs to be changed.





**Annalisa Tassarolo**, Legal Officer, DG Grow, European Commission

The common thread in the policy work the Commission is trying to implement is inclusiveness, and it is present in all the initiatives the Commission is carrying out. The focus on inclusiveness is considered indeed as a main element in the European Standardisation System, where the legislator has recognised the important role of the Annex III Organisations.

The Commission is proud of the Joint Initiative on Standardisation, with its actions being presented at the IEC General Meeting in Frankfurt. The JIS is the only action under the Single Market Strategy that has been achieved so far. The Commission is also launching a questionnaire on inclusiveness with the three European Standards Organisations.

Change takes time, but with the current initiatives, the legal basis for inclusiveness is there, as well as the financing, and the journey is in the right direction.



**Ruggero Lensi**, Director of External Relations, UNI, Italian Organization for Standardisation, and CEN-CENELEC representative

It is important to work together for a more inclusive standardisation system. The system's structure is built on the national delegation principle, and therefore the solutions for a more inclusive system should also take into consideration the different activities and ideas brought forward by member states.

Together, we can and should work on service standardisation, as it is one of the main aspects addressed by the Standardisation Regulation, in order to find new innovative solutions for a smart, agile and inclusive system. The Parliament, Commission, CEN-CENELEC, and Societal Stakeholders must work together in this direction.



**Alexander Eisenberg**, BSH Home Appliances SA and member of CECED

The processes used in standardisation have been working over decades and work in general well. However, there is still room for improvement, and this was clearly highlighted by the Joint Initiative on Standardisation.

BSH and CECED organised a workshop where they gathered different stakeholders from NGOs, test institutes, member states' representatives, for real life testing of vacuum cleaners. Industry working with stakeholders can truly improve standards, and a more inclusive system works.

**Stephen Russell**, ANEC Secretary-General

If European standards are to reflect societal needs, they need to have societal interests included in the development process. Unfortunately, societal engagement at the national level is not always possible or effective, even if the national delegation principle is accepted. The national delegation principle is necessary but not sufficient.

European standardisation is part of a continuum that protects societal welfare. That continuum runs from European policy through to legislation, standardisation, conformity assessment, accreditation, market surveillance and enforcement. The push for international standards is understandable from the business perspective but we as society do not want to see the level of protection we have achieved in Europe diluted by international standardisation as part of regulatory deal. We need to make sure international standards are right for Europe.

#### **Panel discussions:**

Because standardisation supports European legislation and policies, and further takes into consideration not only the market-driven principle but also public interest, it is fundamental that Societal Stakeholders are funded. The four million euros of annual funding to Annex III Organisations provides public confidence in a European Standardisation System that adds up to 100 billion euros of value (according to CEN).

There is a clear need for more political and financial support at the national level, considering the national delegation principle, for Societal Stakeholders. And if this is not possible, it is important to provide free access to the ESOs to all stakeholders who do not have a commercial interest in standardisation.

The national delegation principle cannot be replaced, but needs to be complemented. This is difficult because of the technical expertise required. The alternative production line of balanced participation, mentioned in the EC Communication of June 2011, involving what are now the Annex III Organisations, the Commission and the ESOs should be dusted off.



## Concluding remarks

**Laura Degallaix**, ECOS Director

Standards matter and can play a role in raising consumer safety, improving workers' protection and environmental protection. Standards can also help with the implementation of European laws and policies. But to do so standards need to be developed in a process which is as transparent, open and inclusive as possible.

The standardisation system is not yet fit for inclusiveness. There is a need to rethink the system. The Annex III Organisations have come up with some solutions, such as increasing the visibility of Societal Stakeholders, giving them a separate membership category with specific rights that would allow them to contribute more effectively according to their resources and interests.

But beyond looking at the standardisation system, we need to look at the political approach to standards in the EU i.e. how are standards used by policy makers? Are they the right tool to support policies and do they provide the right technical support? How can it be ensured that there is no delegation of political decisions to the standardisers?

The current initiatives, such as the Standardisation Regulation, the Joint Initiative on Standardisation and the dialogue with CEN and CENELEC on inclusiveness is putting us on the right track and we hope they will bring concrete results.

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*ANEC, ECOS and ETUC warmly thank all the presenters and panellists for their preparation and contributions to the joint event and, of course, all participants for their engagement and for sharing their ideas, expertise and experiences with us. The contributions received from participants will help shape our thinking for making standards serve society.*

### **About the organisers:**

ANEC, the European consumer voice in standardisation, defends consumer interests in the process of standardisation and the use of standards, and in policy or legislation that intends to refer to standards.

[www.anec.eu](http://www.anec.eu)

ECOS, the European Environmental Citizens' Organisation for Standardisation, defends the environment in the development of standards and product ecological policies, particularly focusing on standards developed to support EU environmental legislation and policies. [www.ecostandard.org](http://www.ecostandard.org)

ETUC, the voice of European workers, promotes high quality working conditions for workers in the standardisation process. [www.standardisation.etuc.org](http://www.standardisation.etuc.org)