



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Council Conclusions on standardisation and innovation

*2891st COMPETITIVENESS
(INTERNAL MARKET, INDUSTRY and RESEARCH) Council meeting
Brussels, 25 September 2008*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

THE COUNCIL

"RECALLING

- the conclusions on standardisation adopted on 21 December 2004,¹
- the conclusions adopted in December 2006 entitled "A broad-based innovation strategy",²

CONSIDERING

- the Communication from the European Commission of 19 June 2008 entitled ""Think Small First": A "Small Business Act" for Europe",³
- the fact that standards are drawn up to meet the needs of stakeholders,
- the essential contribution which standardisation can make towards developing innovation and competitiveness, by facilitating access to markets, enabling interoperability between new and existing products, services and processes, enhancing protection of users, giving consumers confidence in innovations and disseminating research results,

¹ 14790/2/04 REV 2.

² 16253/06.

³ 11262/08 + ADD1 + ADD2.

P R E S S

- the potential of standards for encouraging innovation in areas such as services,
- the legislative package on the free circulation of goods⁴ and the role of standards to strengthen the internal market and to support the better regulation policy,
- the context of increasing globalisation in which economic operators must now operate and the importance of the external dimension of competitiveness,

WELCOMES the communication from the European Commission of 11 March 2008 on standardisation and innovation,⁵

ADOPTS the following conclusions:

1. DESIRES that the stakeholders of European standardisation actively participate in international standardisation in order to promote the development of worldwide standards for global markets with a view to facilitating trade and investment in the interests of the European economy;
2. in that spirit, CALLS ON the European Commission, the Member States and European and national standardisation bodies to act in a coordinated manner to promote European standards;
3. RECOMMENDS that public research bodies and public financers of research programmes at European and national level examine, at certain decisive phases of research projects from launch to evaluation, the potential interest in developing standards in order to exploit the results obtained;
4. ENDORSES the European Commission's intention to financially support the development of technology watch activities in order to identify areas where standardisation could be useful to the transfer of research and development results;
5. INVITES standardisers to work closely with the research community in order to include it in standardisation work whenever the research results show that there is potential for developing standards;
6. ENCOURAGES the Member States to take action to increase the value of participation in standardisation activities in the careers of researchers;
7. ASKS European and national standardisation bodies to further facilitate participation in standardisation by all interested parties, in particular representatives of small and medium-sized enterprises, consumers, trade unions and bodies representing societal interests, and ENCOURAGES the European Commission and the Member States to promote the participation of those stakeholders in standardisation work;
8. SUPPORTS the steps taken by the European Commission and the European standardisation bodies to carry out studies into all barriers to the involvement of those stakeholders in standardisation and to the use of standards, as well as into the possible ways of seeking to remove them;

⁴ OJ L 218, 13.8.2008.

⁵ 8049/08.

9. CALLS on the European Commission, the Member States and business associations to strengthen their support for small and medium-sized enterprises to encourage them to cooperate and to promote their interests in standardisation work;
10. UNDERLINES the importance of the principle of national delegation and the crucial role of the national standardisation bodies to better ensure that the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises are taken into account by European standardisation;
11. ENCOURAGES European and national standardisation bodies to exploit information and communications technologies to the full, for example, to organise virtual meetings, in order to facilitate the participation of all interested parties and ensure that their views are collated;
12. EMPHASISES the importance of providing standards in national languages to ensure proper understanding by all users and INVITES European standardisation bodies, in close link with the European Commission, to examine the possibility of using automatic translation systems, in order to facilitate the validation of European standards into national versions by the national standardisation bodies;
13. ENCOURAGES the European Commission, in cooperation with European and national standardisation bodies, to simplify the financing arrangements for the translation of standards, while respecting European financial rules;
14. ASKS European and national standardisation bodies to draw up and validate a summary of each standard at the same time as it is developed, for publication without any access restriction, and to ensure that standards are comprehensible and easy to use so that they can be better understood and implemented by users;
15. RECOMMENDS that European and national standardisation bodies and business associations draw up and disseminate guides on use, adapted to sectors of activity, in order to raise awareness of the standards environment and facilitate the effective use of standards;
16. ENCOURAGES European and national standardisation bodies to provide market players with the means to gain added value from the knowledge stemming from their innovations;
17. RECOGNISES that both standards and patents are innovation dissemination tools and SUPPORTS the carrying out of a study by the European Commission to analyse the interplay between the two;
18. ASKS European standardisation bodies to be particularly vigilant when developing standards based on proprietary technologies, in order to allow broad access to all users, and EMPHASISES the need to implement procedures designed to make intellectual property rights available under fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory conditions;
19. ENCOURAGES European standardisation bodies, together with national standardisation bodies, to review their business model in order to improve access to standardisation and the use of standards and to reduce the cost associated with access to standards, while ensuring their financial viability;

20. RECOGNISES that the three European standardisation bodies have started a process of reform and ASKS them to continue and broaden this process in a timely manner and in close cooperation with each other with a view to reinforcing the effectiveness and visibility of European standardisation, whilst taking better account of the convergence of technologies, and to include all the parties concerned in that process in a transparent manner;
21. CALLS UPON the European Commission to ensure regular monitoring of the progress of that reform and report on it to the Member States;
22. INVITES national standardisation bodies, in coordination with European standardisation bodies, to examine the feasibility of introducing a voluntary peer assessment process to encourage continuous improvement and exchange of good practice;
23. TAKES THE VIEW that it would be helpful for European standardisation bodies to exploit possible synergies with standardisation fora and consortia and RECALLS its preference for making the transformation of informal normative documents into formal standards through the recognised standardisation bodies conditional on an evaluation of market needs, the carrying out of a public enquiry and the search for consensus among all interested parties;
24. POINTS OUT that the desired acceleration of the standardisation process must not take place to the detriment of the principles of quality, transparency and consensus among all interested parties;
25. ENDORSES the desire of the European Commission to support the use of standards in matters relating to sustainable industrial policy, lead markets, public procurement, information and communications technology and the better regulation policy;
26. DRAWS the attention of the European Commission and of all the players involved to the innovative potential existing in the services sector and to the need to inform interested parties of the possible benefits linked to the development of standards in that area, as invited to do by Directive 2006/123/EC on services in the internal market, in order to improve the quality and competitiveness of European services;
27. ENCOURAGES the Member States to improve the position of standardisation in education programmes and academic curricula, in order to familiarise students with the strategic benefits and challenges of standardisation, drawing on the expertise of standardisation bodies;
28. RECOGNISES the need to have medium-term strategic recommendations for standardisation;
29. INVITES the European Commission to review the action plan for European standardisation in the light of these conclusions."