DRAFT REPORT

on a standardisation strategy for the Single Market (2022/2058(INI))

Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection

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The European Parliament,


– having regard to the report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council of 2 February 2022 on the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 from 2016 to 2020 (COM(2022)0030),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 2 February 2022 entitled ‘An EU Strategy on Standardisation: Setting global standards in support of a resilient, green and digital EU single market’ (COM(2022)0031),


– having regard to the Commission Notice of 2 February 2022 entitled ‘The 2022 annual Union work programme for European standardisation’ (C(2022)0546),

– having regard to the Commission staff working document of 22 February 2022 entitled ‘EU strategic dependencies and capacities: second stage of in-depth reviews’ (SWD(2022)0041),

– having regard to the Commission Decision of 1 September 2022 setting up the group of experts ‘High-Level Forum on European Standardisation’ (C(2022)6189),

– having regard to the Joint Initiative on Standardisation under the Single Market Strategy, as referred to in the Commission communication of 28 October 2015 entitled ‘Upgrading the Single Market: more opportunities for people and business’ (COM(2015)0550) and the summary of actions from the Joint Initiative on Standardisation of 15 July 2019,

– having regard to its resolution of 4 July 2017 on European Standards for the 21st century2,

– having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee of 18 May 2022 entitled ‘Standardisation strategy / Standardisation regulation’,

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– having regard to the Commission communication of 19 February 2020 entitled ‘Shaping Europe’s digital future’ (COM(2020)0067),

– having regard to the Commission white paper of 19 February 2020 entitled ‘On Artificial Intelligence – A European approach to excellence and trust’ (COM(2020)0065),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 19 February 2020 entitled ‘A European Strategy for Data’ (COM(2020)0066),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 entitled ‘The European Green Deal’ (COM(2019)0640),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 14 July 2021 entitled “‘Fit for 55”: delivering the EU’s 2030 Climate Target on the way to climate neutrality’ (COM(2021)0550),

– having regard to Rule 54 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (A9-0000/2022),

A. whereas the functioning of the internal market is greatly facilitated by the market’s adoption and use of standards; whereas the adoption of European standards simplifies compliance for market participants and national authorities, replacing as many as 34 national standards with one European standard;

B. whereas the European standardisation system is based on an inclusive, consensus-based, market-driven approach, ensuring that the standards that are developed not only respond to industry needs but also support the interests of wider society;

C. whereas standards, both at international and European level, can be important drivers for market development and technological change; whereas the Member States, European institutions and the European standardisation organisations (ESOs) cooperate with international standardisation bodies and have agreements in place to facilitate the use of international standards in the Union; whereas although European industry is an active participant in international standardisation work streams, the effective representation of smaller companies and other stakeholders in international forums is more challenging;

General remarks

1. Welcomes the adoption of the standardisation strategy, which sets out five main areas for action for the Commission; considers that the classification of priority areas for action closely aligns with the weaknesses of the current system identified during the stakeholder consultation; notes also the adoption of, and progress on, the 2022 annual work programme on standardisation;

2. Considers that the fundamental qualities of the standardisation system remain relevant and effective for the proper functioning of the internal market; recalls that standards are a voluntary, market-driven tool providing technical requirements and guidance, the use
of which facilitates the compliance of goods and services with European legislation and supports the development of European policies in an accountable, transparent and inclusive way; stresses, however, that standards cannot be seen as EU law, since legislation and policies regarding the level of consumer, health, safety, environmental and data protection, and the level of social inclusion, are determined by the legislator;

3. Supports the creation of an annual standardisation dashboard;

**Leveraging the European standardisation system**

4. Supports the launch of the High-Level Forum for Standardisation and the desire to broaden the range of voices heard when identifying standardisation needs, planning future activities and coordinating approaches in standardisation bodies; underlines that this expert group should include a diverse range of stakeholders, without losing sight of the bottom-up, market-driven nature of standardisation activities;

5. Notes the intention to involve Parliament and the Council in an annual event to prepare priorities for standardisation activities; considers that the importance of standardisation as a strategic initiative and an operational element of the internal market necessitates deeper and more regular scrutiny by the co-legislators than is possible at an annual event;

6. Welcomes the creation of an EU excellence hub on standards and the appointment of a chief standardisation officer (CSO) in the Commission; believes that this position and the hub, as a resource, should lead to greater consistency across the Commission in terms of standardisation requests and the preparation and adoption of standards and legislative provisions with relevance to standardisation; considers that the person holding this oversight function should be an important interlocutor for Parliament, enabling the technical scrutiny of the Commission’s standardisation activities;

7. Believes that the Commission should establish a clear set of key performance indicators on the aspects of standardisation within its remit;

8. Notes the risk of overlap between the High-Level Forum and the EU excellence hub, together with other expert groups, industry forums and policy-specific groupings, such as the AccessibleEU centre, which Parliament considers could assist the Commission on standardisation matters; encourages the Commission to avoid the duplication of work streams and to seek collaboration between forums where possible so as to make the best use of experts’ limited time, encourage participation and minimise administrative costs;

9. Notes that the Commission wishes to accelerate the steps involved in developing standards; considers that the timely preparation of standards is necessary for the proper functioning of the internal market, in particular in the case of harmonised standards;

10. Believes that delays in the standardisation processes stem from various causes; considers that the Commission may wish to reconsider its approach following the *James Elliot* case and avoid the use of overly prescriptive requirements in relation to standardisation requests, which reduce the capacity of experts to propose appropriate

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solutions to meet the needs of a standard and narrow the scope for future-proofing standards;

11. Stresses that there may be inherent limits to speeding up the standardisation process, as the preparation of standards, citation of harmonised standards and industry implementation of those standards all add time before market adoption; recognises that it may be easier to accelerate administrative tasks, such as citation in the Official Journal, but that the unduly rushed preparation or deployment of standards creates challenges for all stakeholders, including national authorities; encourages the Commission, in conjunction with improvements to its own internal processes, to continue working with the ESOs on ways of achieving timely delivery, including consideration of the most suitable standardisation deliverable depending on the need;

**Upholding the integrity, inclusiveness and accessibility of the European standardisation system**

12. Considers that an evaluation of Regulation (EU) 1025/2012 may identify areas where reform is needed beyond the targeted amendment already introduced by the Commission; considers that the role, participation and input of relevant stakeholders, including those representing, inter alia, SMEs and environmental, social and consumer interests, should be evaluated and strengthened where such reforms may be beneficial and complementary to work envisaged by the ESOs following the Commission’s call for them to present proposals to reform their own internal governance;

13. Welcomes the focus on national-level involvement of wider stakeholders in standardisation activities; notes that not all organisations listed in Annex III have national counterparts in the Member States; considers that the Commission may direct funding or technical support to those organisations to ensure participation in national standardisation activities, including not only technical work on standards, but also the preparation of positions vis-à-vis standardisation requests at the European and international levels, thereby reinforcing the inclusivity of the process as a whole;

14. Recognises the need for a consistent approach towards technical or common specifications, in particular as different legislative processes may give rise to divergent provisions; considers, therefore, that this mechanism should only be used in exceptional circumstances and only while relevant standards do not exist; expresses concern about technical specifications concerning, among other things, respect for fundamental rights, where recourse to implementing acts affects the co-legislators’ powers of scrutiny;

15. Considers that divergent regulatory outcomes may also affect the standardisation process more generally, owing to differing terminology, the lack of standard clauses for standardisation requests and difficulties in *ex ante* oversight; underlines that this problem is even more significant where standards are relevant for more than one regulatory act; believes that a common approach or formalised agreement between the Commission and the co-legislators could be explored in order to streamline the preparation of standards and detailed conditions for technical specifications;

**Setting international standards**
16. Believes that it is essential to improve European coordination and engagement at international level in relation to standardisation, while respecting the right of national delegations to reach their own decisions in international forums; considers, nevertheless, that where similar viewpoints exist, and are also shared with third-country partners, European policy leadership on standards development can act as a multiplier for European industrial leadership;

17. Emphasises that prioritising standardisation matters in cooperation with third countries in bi-, multi- and pluri-lateral settings is also important to ensure that like-minded, inclusive approaches towards standardisation can prevail at international level; encourages, in this regard, the Commission and the CSO to develop key performance indicators to monitor commitments on standardisation between the Union and third countries;

Cutting-edge innovations that foster timely standard-setting

18. Stresses the value of commercialisation for research activities, including early consideration of the suitability for standardisation of projects launched under the Union’s research funding programmes; welcomes the creation of the ‘standardisation booster’, as a test bed for standards’ suitability;

Ensuring future standardisation expertise

19. Supports the development of awareness-raising and training programmes aimed at developing pathways towards standardisation activities for academics, future industry professionals and policymakers;

20. Reiterates its call for greater collaboration among EU institutions, national governments and ESOs in order to develop training guidelines for policymakers and to create a standardisation culture;

21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.