

A successful European Standardisation System

Task Force (TF) between the EC, EFTA, CEN, CENELEC and ETSI

"Timely European Standards for a Green and Digital, Single and Global Market"

Why this Task Force (TF)?

The European standardisation system is a global success story. The unique public-private partnership between the EC, European standardisation organisations (ESOs) and industrial/societal stakeholders –and with the involvement of Member States, National Standards Bodies (NSB), National Committees (NC) and EFTA - has produced world-leading standards in support of EU policies and legislation that benefit European citizens, industry and the environment. But this partnership is also subject to change and continuous improvements, which have led to a joint understanding of the need to undertake a thorough assessment of partnership in order to prosper and progress.

This is why representatives of the EC, EFTA and the three European Standardisation Organisations – CEN, CENELEC and ETSI – decided to form a TF that could work together on short, medium and long term solutions: to address strategic and operational matters that enables the European standardisation system to deliver a green, digital and resilient Single Market.

Topics addressed

The TF worked along two work streams:

- 1) better alignment of European policies, business priorities and standardisation in strategic sectors.
- 2) improving operational matters to enhance responsiveness, quality, agility and speed of the overall standards development and citation process.

Achievements and Actions

This document outlines the main achievements of the TF since June 2021, proposing a number of actions to be rolled-out and piloted in the coming months. The objective is to connect the dots and improve the overall standards development process, (including the whole lifecycle, flow of information and communication) to assist the standardisation actors in their daily work and to achieve both a higher and faster citation rate of harmonised European standards, from the very beginning of the process to the final citation in the process.

The success of the actions of this TF requires – and has – the voluntary commitment of all actors in the system, but does not bind them in any specific way. This procedure is a continuous exercise that will be based around gathering feedback from all actors and is subject to ensure continuous improvements.

Work Stream 1 : early, anticipatory discussions on strategic topics and role of standardisation

Bring together a wide range of partners in a given industry or value chain, including public and private actors and civil society

- Pilots within industrial alliances: standards-specific work within the clean hydrogen and artificial intelligence alliances

Built around a common goal to implement EU policy objectives. Involve the standardisation community early on in decision making on policy, regulation or financing

- High-Level Forum on Standardisation

Work Stream 2 : operational improvements

The TF undertook a thorough analysis of the full process for the development of European and harmonised European standards: different blocks were identified, solutions around key topics from communication, capacity building, training, IT-inter-operability to improvement of procedures developed.

Preliminary Discussions & drafting of standardisation request

Execution of the standardisation request

ESOs offering & EC citation

Maintenance and capacity building

Standardisation Requests

Objective: to have standardisation requests that fully address EU policy and legislative requirements, while being implementable by the standardisers based on the technological state-of-the-art.

Expected results:

(i) early agreement on very clear content of the standardisation request, (ii) ensure its support to the Single Market; and (iii) a smoother standards-development process and citation in the Official Journal.

The TF has agreed on:

- higher awareness in Expert Groups and ESOs;
- clarity of standardisation request scope, objectives and requirements that the future standards will have to fulfill
- list of standards to be agreed between the EC and the ESOs
- deadlines for standards to be discussed
- expiry date to be set 12 months later than the latest standards deadline
- development of a checklist to ensure all blocking aspects have been addressed.

Drafting and formal approval of the requested Standards

After the acceptance of the standardisation request, each ESO works on its specific process to start the activity of enabling the technical committees to develop the standards.

The TF addressed:

improving the cooperation of the HAS consultant's relationship. Improving current checklists for the drafting of the requested standards to ensure that all known recurrent blocking issues are duly addressed. Consolidating and making available material for common guidance for Technical Bodies experts and HAS consultants & EC Desk officers Using the checklists to monitor and improve as to avoid recurrent issues and help the ESO's with the quality assessment of the deliverables.

ESO Formal Approval of Standards

Once agreed by the ESO, the hENs are sent to the NSB/NCs for enquiry and vote. The TF has identified the importance of properly engaging the EC through its HAS consultants, in particular ensuring their proper feedback to the technical committees after the assessments.

It was agreed to have a resolution meeting, after the first round of enquiry and vote, should there be technical comments by the NSBs/NSOs or a negative result of the vote.

The parties have agreed to monitor the adequacy of the aforementioned measures in the recently accepted SRs.

Citation

After the finalisation of the harmonised standards, the EC and the ESOs have agreed to monitor the time from ESOs publication to the citation in the OJEU. The ESOs will monitor that the replies to any possible EC questions arrive to the EC within a specific timeframe, as delays may postpone the EC Decision process for the citation of a number of standards.

Assessments

The fitness of standards will be checked every 5 years and appropriate action will be taken. (e.g. updating or withdrawal of standards). The TF will provide regular guidance and periodical trainings to committees, sectors and HAS consultants, to ensure homogenous assessments.