

The report outlines principles and guidelines for draft Regulations laying down provisions on the Regional Development Fund, the Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund.

INTERNAL MARKET

European standardisation - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"A. THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. *recalling* its Resolution of 28 October 1999⁵ on the role of standardisation in Europe and its Conclusions of 1 March 2002⁶;
2. *welcoming* the Commission Communication on the role of European standardisation in the framework of European policies and legislation⁷.
3. *recognising* that European standardisation can make a valuable contribution to the implementation of the Lisbon objectives, in particular in improving the competitiveness of European industry and businesses;
4. *recognising* that progress in making wider use of general reference to voluntary standards in the legislative context has been achieved⁸ and should be further pursued;
5. *encouraging* European standardisation to continue its contribution in all areas liable to support sustainable development;
6. *recognising* the role of European and international standardisation and the need for further progress in view of the introduction of new technologies and the smooth functioning of the internal market of services;

⁵ Council Resolution of 28 October 1999 on "The Role of Standardisation in Europe" (OJ C141 of 19 May 2000).

⁶ Council Conclusions on standardisation of 1 March 2002 (OJ C66 of 15 March 2002).

⁷ COM (2004) 674 final of 18 October 2004.

⁸ Commission Staff Working Document "The Challenges for European Standardisation".

7. *recalling* the Council Resolution of 10 November 2003⁹ on "Enhancing the implementation of the New Approach Directives" and taking the view that an effective European key-marking system needs to be promoted by relevant stakeholders to allow voluntary compliance with European standards;
8. *acknowledging* that European standardisation has proven to be a successful tool for the completion of the Single Market for goods;
9. *noting* the Commission initiative to initiate and reform the institutional framework and to propose a new legal basis for the financing of European standardisation;
10. *considering* that European standardisation can play an important role to increase the competitiveness of European enterprises and taking into account the success of the New Approach and underlining its role in support of better regulation policy;
11. *highlighting* the importance of standardisation in order to achieve interoperability of systems and applications;
12. *emphasising* that standards also play an important role in innovation. In particular, they can broaden the knowledge base of the economy and integrate new technologies and research results harmoniously into the design and development process of products and services;
13. Regarding the Resolution of 28 October 1999, and noting with satisfaction the progress:
 - 1) in the commitment to international standardisation and under the obligations under the World Trade Organisation's Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement (WTO-TBT);
 - 2) in the development, in consultation with the Member States, of guidelines for a European standardisation policy¹⁰;
 - 3) in the development of new policies diversifying the range of standardisation products ("New Deliverables");
 - 4) in the efforts of the Commission to promote European standardisation activities.

⁹ OJ C 282 of 25 November 2003.

¹⁰ Guidelines for cooperation between CEN, CENELEC and ETSI and the European Commission and the EFTA (28 March 2003); Commission Staff Working Paper SEC(2001) 1296 of 26 July 2001 "European Policy Principles on International Standardisation"; Vademecum on European Standardisation.

B. ADOPTS THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS:

The Council:

1. *notes* the commitment of the European standardisation organisations and the steps already undertaken to reduce the average time to issue standards and *encourages* them to pursue these efforts further;
2. *invites* all interested parties on European standardisation to remain committed to European standardisation, to contribute to the elaboration of European and international standards and to make the broadest possible use of them;
3. *invites* the European standardisation organisations to further improve efficiency and market relevance of standardisation activities, to strengthen their cooperation and coordination with the aim to achieve increased synergies, technical coherence and more efficient use of resources;
4. *stresses* the need to make further progress in the application of standardisation to areas such as Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), services, transport, consumer and environmental protection;
5. *calls* upon European service industries to strive to make an increased use of voluntary standards in order to enhance the internal market for services and to foster competitiveness of the European service industries;
6. *invites* the European standardisation organisations to inform the public and the market in a transparent way about their activities, the results and the benefits of European standardisation.

Recommendations for further actions:

- a) A more extensive use of European standardisation in European policies and legislation

1. *invites* the Commission and the Member States to make a wider use of European (i.e. CEN, CENELEC, ETSI) and international standards in their policies; Particular attention should be paid to the role of standards in the simplification of existing EU legislation, in order to meet the needs of stakeholders, including SMEs;
 2. *recognises* that further progress can be made in new areas of EU legislation in making wider use of general references to voluntary standards, taking into account European policies on governance and better regulation;
 3. *invites* the Member States to apprise decision-makers of the advantages of European standardisation in support of Community legislation and policies;
- b) Improving the efficiency, coherence, visibility of European standardisation and its institutional framework
1. *notes* that adequate participation in standardisation of all parties concerned (social partners, NGOs, environmental interest groups, consumers, SMEs, authorities, etc.) is not sufficiently implemented at present within all Member States. European standardisation should be recognised as a strategic tool for competitiveness and for the uniform application of technical legislation in the internal market. The commitment of everybody should be reactivated in this respect;
 2. *invites* the Commission, Member States, European and National Standardisation Organisations to consider optimising the European standardisation system, in order to make best use of resources available and to explore further options to ensure viable financing of standardisation in Europe;
- c) Promoting European standardisation in a globalised world
1. *invites* European standardisation organisations to enhance the visibility of the European standardisation system on the global market;

2. *invites* all interested parties to promote European standardisation activities in the international standardisation organisations (e.g. ISO, IEC, ITU) and to support the uniform application of international standards in the European Union in accordance with European policies;
3. *recalls* its invitation¹¹ to the Commission and the Member States to continue the promotion of standards-receptive regulatory models, such as those developed by the UN/ECE, with the Community trading partners, in order to promote international cooperation and facilitate market access;
4. *invites* the Commission to contribute to reinforce the role and show the benefits of European standardisation and European standards in the international context.

Action plan and Progress report:

1. *invites* the Commission to elaborate as a matter of priority, in cooperation with Member States and parties concerned, in particular the European standardisation organisations, an action plan aiming at further implementing the recommendations of the Communication and to monitor, together with all stakeholders, its implementation;

with regard to the ongoing measures being taken by the Commission, by the European standardisation organisations, their members and by the Member States,

2. *requests* the Commission to monitor and present a further report within an appropriate period of time;
3. *will keep* the subject of standardisation under constant review."

¹¹ Council Conclusions of 1 March 2002.