

How standards can boost competitiveness in an open standardisation system

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Standardisation is a key for competitiveness and innovation. This can be summarised as the bottom line of a standardisation stakeholders' roundtable organised jointly by CEN-CENELEC and the Parliament Magazine on 4th March 2015. The event was hosted by Vicky Ford, Member of the European Parliament and Chair of the internal market and consumer protection committee (IMCO). Alongside representatives of the European Standardisation Organisations CEN and CENELEC, the European Institutions, and industry stakeholders the roundtable also featured a presentation by Barbara Sorgato Secretary General of the European Consortium of Anchors Producers (ECAP), SBS board member and SBS appointed expert giving a voice to the important role of SMEs within the standardisation system and their contribution to competitiveness and innovation.



The roundtable offered an important opportunity for different standardisation stakeholders to offer their views on how standardisation serves as an important tool to boost competitiveness and enable innovation. Vicky Ford who welcomed the roundtable participants and gave an opening speech on the role of standards for business and consumers within the internal market, pointed out current discussions related to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations and the need to take into account differences when asking when a standard would be needed.

Kerstin Jorna, Director of Industry Property, innovation and Standards at the European Commission stressed the currently ongoing review of standardisation policy in Europe which was kicked off by the European Parliament in 2010. Underlining the intrinsic features of the European Standardisation system, Kerstin Jorna stressed how important it was that standards would be created by the industry for the industry while maintaining a high degree of inclusiveness for the wide array of stakeholders to be involved as ensured through the involvement of Annex III

organisations according to EU Regulation 1025/2012. Tore Trondvold, President of the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation (CENELEC) stated the importance of standards as a tool for international trade, while at the same time maintaining and enhancing health, safety, the environment and consumers' interests. He likewise stressed that the European Standardisation System needed to be open to all stakeholders in order for standards to meet market needs.

Representing the business perspective from a big – if not one of the biggest multinationals – Christian Wetterberg of LEGO likewise emphasised that and how standardisation contributes to innovation and thus growth for the company while at the same time pointing out the need to have a wide range of stakeholders involved in the standardisation process.

Barbara Sorgato of ECAP, SBS Board members complemented the business perspective from the viewpoint of SMEs which consist of 20 million SMEs in Europe, thus representing 99.8% of all European business and 57.6% of gross value added in Europe. Proving the example of SMEs in the structural fixing markets and their importance within the construction sector, Barbara Sorgato pointed out how SMEs have decided to jointly cooperate in standardisation as the best and most efficient way to have their common interests represented within the European Standardisation System in the interest of an overall favourable economic framework for businesses. Within the framework of her presentation, Barbara Sorgato explained the work of SME experts in technical committees at National and European Standardisation Organisations, the importance of the Guide 17 “Guidance for writing standards taking into account micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) needs” and the work of Small Business Standards in representing SME interests at European level. Barbara Sorgato’s key message consisted of the need for cooperation among the business sector – notably multinationals and SMEs – in order to genuinely boost Europe’s competitiveness by enabling active participation of the whole business sector. A necessary requirement in order to keep the “biodiversity in the EU construction market”.

The roundtable’s last intervention was given by Paolo Falcioni, Director General of the European Committee of Domestic Equipment Manufacturers, pointing out how necessary it is for standards to enable interoperability, take into account important safety requirements and contribute to a better usage of resource efficiency.

The roundtable ended with concluding remarks provided by Vicky Ford, stressing once more the importance of standards in boosting Europe’s competitiveness.