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DIGITALEUROPE views and messages for the new European Standardisation Strategy



Executive Summary

In this paper, DIGITALEUROPE shares its main views and messages regarding the European standardisation framework. In the interest to best support the EU economy in the global competition, we expect the Commission to take into account these points in the preparation of the European Standardisation Strategy and in the review of the Industrial Strategy, both expected in late April 2021. This paper is also directed towards the broader audience of EU stakeholders and legislators, including Parliament and Council.

DIGITALEUROPE advocates for a standardisation framework which encourages innovation, reduces fragmentation, fosters scaling up and deploying products across the EU. This standardisation framework should be based upon an open, voluntary, market-driven and consensus-based standards system which facilitates international trade and market access.

The strong European voice (based on the individual voting rights of the European national standards organisations) in the international standards organisations (ISO & IEC) as well as the representation of EU businesses in global fora and consortia¹ ensure a smooth alignment between the European and the International standardisation framework.

¹ [EU regulation 1025/2012](#) Annex II defined organisations such as Oasis, W3C and IETF.



Key messages

▶▶ **The European Standardisation System offers a reliable and trusted avenue for the technical harmonization within the Single Market.**

Implementing acts, codes of conduct as well as legislative and other related technical specifications published by the Commission should be avoided wherever they are intended to replace standards and only be used cautiously and in reference to topics for which standardisation is not appropriate. In many cases, they are to be considered competitors to the regular European standards – while lacking the procedural safeguards associated with the European standards development process and without incorporating the technical expertise and experience of all European stakeholders.

For example, we would strongly urge the Commission to use the route of standardization for the purpose of the regulatory compliance with the requirements in European Accessibility Act for both products and services, leveraging on existing consensus based technical solutions, rather than using the Commission's own technical specifications.

Using them as alternative routes to standards instead will create technical barriers to trade, preclude the use of the state-of-the-art technology, raise IPR issues, and negatively affect the growth of the European Single Market. Consequently, the use of these instruments should be avoided as much as possible.

▶▶ **The process for referencing harmonised European standards in the Official Journal should avoid conflicts or misalignment** with international standards. In recent years, changes to the citation process which are based on the unilateral interpretation of existing regulations have made this process slow and cumbersome, eventually degrading the EU conformity scheme (and the New Approach and Global Approach principles it is based upon).

Therefore, at the very least, the role of the HAS consultants needs to be reviewed and assessed, with an honest analysis of the extent to which the whole process meets or fails to meet expectations, to address dysfunctions, ensure consistency in the review process of harmonised European standards, and to avoid any delay or even blocking in the development and adoption of the standards. Delays may lead to

divergences with international standards that could create market access barriers and harm European consumers and businesses.²

- ▶ **The process to develop relevant standards for current technology and market needs is based on the premise of bringing stakeholders and technical experts together.** The time to develop standards varies and usually takes between one to three years. To support the development and competitiveness of European industry, any political attention and involvement needs to acknowledge the long-term perspective, the needed high quality of harmonized European standards, (ENs) as well as the commitment and investment undertaken by the industry. DIGITALEUROPE highlights the importance of the voluntary nature of ENs to the extent that they allow industry a more technologically neutral mechanism to demonstrate compliance to the relevant and specific legal requirements.

DIGITALEUROPE would also like to underscore the importance of Multistakeholder Platform for ICT Standardisation (MSP)³ which we helped create and drive since 2011. The MSP provides an important global forum to understand and advise the Commission as to ICT standardisation policy, and ensure it is aligned with the latest technical innovation and market developments.

- ▶ **Promote cooperation and coherence in Standards Activities.** The European Standardisation system should always look for opportunities for collaboration and information exchange, to identify opportunities to make standardisation processes more efficient and coherent, and formalize agreements as appropriate. With regards to the increasing use of open source software (OSS) in Standard Development Organisations (SDO), the European Commission's report⁴ provides some observations to "improve the interaction between SDOs and OSS in order to exploit further the existing synergies".
- ▶ **Europe should build technical regulations and legislation which rely on international standards developed in a transparent manner, according to consensus-based processes which ensure open and**

² See also the joint industry letter to the Council and Commission:
https://www.digitaleurope.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Open-letter-to-PT-Pcy_.pdf

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/european-multi-stakeholder-platform-ict-standardisation>

⁴ The Relationship Between Open Source Software and Standard Setting (2019):
<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/relationship-between-open-source-software-and-standard-setting>

non-discriminatory participation of all interested stakeholders and which follow the WTO TBT Principles for the Development of International Standards⁵. Our European Standardisation System was successfully integrated into the international standards system and now both allows European stakeholders to strongly influence the development of international standards as well as to adopt international standards as European standards.

Alignment between European and international standards is needed to ensure that the EU market does not fall behind the global state-of-the-art. It supports technological innovation while protecting the environment, health, safety and security. The primacy of international standards is a well-established principle by, for instance, CEN and CENELEC and their national standards bodies across Europe.

- ▶ **Independent European standards should be developed only when there are unique European requirements** that cannot be addressed by international standards. In such exceptional cases, European Standards Organisations (ESOs) can mobilise all European stakeholders with relevant expertise, guided and constrained by clear, stable and transparent governance. The public-private partnership between the ESOs and the Commission has been working well over decades, and is a necessary component to realizing the Digital Single Market.

As a positive example of such European standards, we can refer to the standardisation framework developed to facilitate linking safe and reliable autonomous driving with the EU's Galileo global navigation satellite system (GNSS). Developed by industry and stakeholders within CEN-CENELEC's JTC5, the EN16803 series of standards outlines the methodologies for assessing and testing Intelligent Transport Systems and its integration with GNSS.

DIGITALEUROPE reminds policymakers that the ICT product market is global and not solely European, meaning many ICT product manufacturers utilise international standards and associated compliance processes. As such, the use of European specific standards should be very limited, and be built on top of international standards to mitigate additional European specific development and compliance process impacts.

- ▶ **Technology and digital sovereignty shall be viewed in light of inclusiveness, choice (including interoperability and portability) and as a driver for global collaborations rather than protectionism.** Europe can thrive and lead not only via the necessary support,

⁵ https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tbt_e/principles_standards_tbt_e.htm

investments and commitment to technology evolutions in the Single Market but also through standardisation that supports access and usage of global state-of-the-art technology. European stakeholders are ready to integrate European positions in international standards. There should be a holistic view on the impact of the relevant policy initiatives and their connections, rather than approaching them separately – this is particularly crucial for the green and digital transitions. With proportionate representation of European stakeholders in the work of international SDOs, international and global standards will be adequate to support the objective of digital sovereignty for Europe.

Therefore, rather than closing off the EU from the global standardisation framework, DIGITALEUROPE urges the Commission to (re-)build and strengthen its international engagement.⁶ We fully support initiatives to tighten the trans-Atlantic partnership with the USA and to continue fostering partnerships across the world, such as through the annual dialogue with countries like Japan.⁷

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:



Jochen Mistiaen

Senior Policy Manager

jochen.mistiaen@digitaleurope.org / +32 496 20 54 11

⁶ See also the InDiCo project for building bridges between the EU and partner countries (<https://www.indico-ictstandards.eu/>) or the CEN-CENELEC visibility projects (<https://www.cencenelec.eu/intcoop/projects/visibility/Pages/default.aspx>).

⁷ See for example the annual EU-Japan Industrial Policy Dialogue: https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/international-aspects/cooperation-governments/eu-japan_en

About DIGITALEUROPE

DIGITALEUROPE represents the digital technology industry in Europe. Our members include some of the world's largest IT, telecoms and consumer electronics companies and national associations from every part of Europe. DIGITALEUROPE wants European businesses and citizens to benefit fully from digital technologies and for Europe to grow, attract and sustain the world's best digital technology companies. DIGITALEUROPE ensures industry participation in the development and implementation of EU policies.

DIGITALEUROPE Membership

Corporate Members

Accenture, Airbus, Amazon, AMD, Apple, Arçelik, Atos, Autodesk, Bayer, Bidao, Bosch, Bose, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Brother, Canon, Cisco, DATEV, Dell, Dropbox, Eli Lilly and Company, Epson, Ericsson, Facebook, Fujitsu, GlaxoSmithKline, Google, Graphcore, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Hitachi, HP Inc., HSBC, Huawei, Intel, Johnson & Johnson, JVC Kenwood Group, Konica Minolta, Kyocera, Lenovo, Lexmark, LG Electronics, Mastercard, Microsoft, Mitsubishi Electric Europe, Motorola Solutions, MSD Europe Inc., NEC, NetApp, Nokia, Nvidia Ltd., Oki, OPPO, Oracle, Palo Alto Networks, Panasonic Europe, Philips, Pioneer, Qualcomm, Red Hat, Ricoh, Roche, Rockwell Automation, Samsung, SAP, SAS, Schneider Electric, Sharp Electronics, Siemens, Siemens Healthineers, Sky CP, Sony, Swatch Group, Technicolor, Texas Instruments, Toshiba, TP Vision, UnitedHealth Group, Visa, VMware, Workday, Xerox.

National Trade Associations

Austria: IOÖ

Belarus: INFOPARK

Belgium: AGORIA

Croatia: Croatian Chamber of Economy

Cyprus: CITEA

Denmark: DI Digital, IT BRANCHEN, Dansk Erhverv

Estonia: ITL

Finland: TIF

France: AFNUM, SECIMAVI, Syntec Numérique, Tech in France

Germany: bitkom, ZVEI

Greece: SEPE

Hungary: IVSZ

Ireland: Technology Ireland

Italy: Anitec-Assinform

Lithuania: INFOBALT

Luxembourg: APSI

Netherlands: NLdigital, FIAR

Norway: Abelia

Poland: KIGEIT, PIIT, ZIPSEE

Portugal: AGEFE

Romania: ANIS

Slovakia: ITAS

Slovenia: ICT Association of Slovenia at CCIS

Spain: AMETIC

Sweden: Teknikföretagen, IT&Telekomföretagen

Switzerland: SWICO

Turkey: Digital Turkey Platform, ECID

United Kingdom: techUK