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- having regard to Rule 58 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control and the opinion of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (A4-0009/99),
1. Approves the Commission proposal, subject to Parliament's amendments;
 2. Calls on the Commission to alter its proposal accordingly, pursuant to Article 189a(2) of the EC Treaty;
 3. Calls on the Council to incorporate Parliament's amendments in the common position that it adopts in accordance with Article 189b(2) of the EC Treaty;
 4. Points out that the Commission is required to submit to Parliament any modification it may intend to make to its proposal as amended by Parliament;
 5. Instructs its President to forward this opinion to the Council and Commission.

5. European standardisation

A4-0501/98

Resolution on the report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament 'Efficiency and Accountability in European Standardisation under the New Approach' (COM(98)0291 – C4-0442/98)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the report from the Commission (COM(98)0291 – C4-0442/98),
 - having regard to the Council Resolution of 7 May 1985 concerning a new approach in the area of technical harmonisation and standardisation ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the June 1991 Vienna Convention on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN, and the September 1996 Dresden Convention on exchanges of technical data between Cenelec and the CEI,
 - having regard to the Commission report to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 25 November 1997 on coordination of activities to assist small and medium-sized enterprises and the crafts sector (COM(97)0610 – C4-0019/98) and to its resolution thereon of 5 November 1998 ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament on wider use of standardisation in Community policy (COM(95)0412), and to its resolution thereon of 19 September 1996 ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to the hearing held by its Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy on 10 June 1996 with representatives of CEN, ETSI, AFNOR, TUTB and ANEC, and two representatives of enterprise,
 - having regard to the report by the Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs and Industrial Policy (A4-0501/98),
- A. whereas European standardisation makes an unmistakable contribution to the removal of restrictions in the area of free movement of goods and services and thus to the completion of a Europe without internal borders,
- B. whereas, although European standardisation is a means of technical coordination, the definition of the individual features of a standard can be influenced by other than purely technical concerns,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 136, 4.6.1985, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ Minutes of that sitting, Part II, Item 10.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 320, 28.10.1996, p. 208.

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- C. whereas Directive 83/189/EEC has, since 1 January 1985, helped considerably to prevent new obstacles to trade from emerging, and has promoted cooperation between national standards institutes,
- D. whereas efficient European standardisation is of crucial importance for the competitive capability of an industry that wishes to have access as speedily as possible to a system of standards that is well adapted to current levels of technical expertise,
- E. whereas on the one hand the centre of gravity of standardisation activities has shifted from national to European level and on the other the importance of international standards cannot be underestimated, since more than one third of CEN standards are already identical to international standards, and as much as 95% of Cenelec standards,
- F. whereas at present on average a quarter of all standards are linked to the new approach; whereas that proportion can be expected to rise in the years to come,
- G. whereas the first-generation harmonised standards will shortly come up for review and adjustment to technical progress, and financial assistance will be necessary to ensure updating,
- H. whereas the efficiency and transparency of the standardisation process is not the responsibility of the European standards institutes alone but also of national governments, the Commission and national standards institutes, and is consequently the result of their joint efforts,
- I. whereas it is difficult to measure the efficiency of the standardisation process since 'time' is only one factor to be considered, 'quality' in the sense of taking fairly into account the interests of all 'stakeholders' and the general public, being another,
- J. whereas the standardisation process relies in particular on the independence of national and European standards institutes, and thus on the discharge of the duty of responsibility,
- K. whereas although the standardisation process needs to strike a balance between transparency and efficiency, the question of the market impact of standardisation activities must not be overlooked,
- L. whereas standardisation can constitute an effective, generally acceptable and readily adaptable supplement to legislation, and can in some cases, if given a clear legal framework, provide an alternative to binding rules and regulations,
1. Welcomes the Commission report and the practical proposals it contains for improving efficiency and transparency in the standardisation process, and hopes that it signals the start of a continuing process;
 2. Warmly welcomes the philosophy of the 'new approach', which is based on participation by all interested parties and on consensus between the parties concerned, is aimed, in particular, at abolishing non-tariff barriers to trade, has a voluntary, market-oriented and dynamic character, and will make a flexible form of legislation possible that will lend itself to being rapidly adapted to technical progress;
 3. Points, however, to the fact that more resources must be made available to SMEs and consumer and environment organisations at national and EU level to enable them to participate adequately in the standardisation process;
 4. Notes with satisfaction that voluntary standards have proved their worth, in particular in sectors making use of advanced technologies, and in certain cases have been substituted for binding rules;
 5. Urges the Commission to draw up a Green Paper within two years containing cost-benefit analyses and assessments of European standardisation work and supporting its implementation, and to benchmark and implement a best practice model of the standardisation process in Europe *vis-à-vis* other economies;
 6. Urges the Commission in particular to conduct a study into the impact of standardisation on the economy for this Green Paper;

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7. Agrees with the Commission that progress with standardisation work must also keep pace with the so-called internal market 'scoreboard';
8. Notes that cooperation between the three European standards institutes — CEN, Cenelec and ETSI — generally operates smoothly, and consequently fails to see how, at this time, a merger of European standards institutes could make the standardisation process more efficient, since each institute has established its own particular expertise, there would be no clear advantage to be gained that could be offset against the cost and effort of adjustment, and none of the European standards institutes advocates it;
9. Opposes the use of formal voting at an early stage of standardisation activities with the objective of speeding the process up, since the European standardisation process is based on mutual agreement, which in turn safeguards the participation, involvement and confidence of all parties;
10. Believes therefore that a balance must be struck not only between transparency and efficiency, but also between efficiency and the market impact of standardisation activities, and calls consequently on the Commission and national and European standards institutes to look into that aspect more closely;
11. Considers, however, that the European standards institutes must themselves determine what measures are appropriate to raise efficiency and that they should, in the interests of credibility, respect timetables; stresses that throughout the standardisation work, European standards institutes remain fully accountable to the interests they represent;
12. Recognises the useful role that publicly available specifications (PAS) can play as input to the standardisation process and welcomes the work accomplished hitherto on procedure types, enabling PAS to be developed within a transparent framework; recommends to the numerous PAS developers that they continue to use the PAS platforms on offer; points out, however, that a number of practical problems must be solved before these PAS can be awarded a higher status under the new approach;
13. Notes that in some sectors — in particular the building trade — mutual recognition of national conformity certification procedures remains a dead letter, and that it is consequently almost impossible for manufacturers of building materials to export to all Member States;
14. Considers therefore that the Commission must exercise closer supervision of the extent to which national departments recognise each other's technical approval or conformity certificates, and must therefore come forward with proposals that will strengthen the procedures applicable in cases of infringement of the principle of mutual recognition;
15. Welcomes also the Commission's intention, in accordance with the SLIM team recommendation, to amend the building materials Directive so as to enable producers to apply, even in the absence of harmonised technical specifications, for a 'CE' symbol, provided that they can demonstrate that their products comply with the most important requirements of the Directive;
16. Advocates a graduated scheme of European conformity symbols that, in addition to the 'CE' symbol, will also provide for voluntary private or statutory conformity symbols issued by independent bodies on the basis of sample-testing followed by monitoring of production, in order to comply with the market's expectations of reliable product-labelling;
17. Calls on national, European and international standards institutes to consult in a meaningful way with all relevant parties concerned — employees, employers, consumers and environmental groupings — and to publish a resumé of views submitted by those parties, and believes that further progress in that area is possible; consequently supports the conference with all interested parties to be held by the Commission in March 1999;
18. Welcomes the existing agreements with ANEC (consumers) and TUTB (trade unions) and the new 1995 memorandum of agreement aimed at improving policy on awareness enhancement, and appeals in that connection to the European Office of Crafts, Trades and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises for Standardisation (Normapme); believes, however, that Euro Info centres and chambers of commerce and industry also have an important part to play in the awareness-improving process;

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19. Remains nevertheless convinced that awareness-improvement and SME participation in the standardisation process are of crucial importance, and that small and medium-sized sectors must therefore certainly be involved at national level, since many operators will incur costs in complying with European legislation resulting from the new approach;
20. Supports the Commission in its appeal to European standards institutes to make progress reports on New Approach areas freely available on the Internet, and to host links providing information about Directives, mandates, lists of references of European standards published for individual New Approach Directives, lists of notified authorities and related information at national level;
21. Agrees with the Commission that standards institutes in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe must be more closely involved with the activities of European standards institutes, and that interested parties in those countries must be able to count on support from the Commission;
22. Attaches, moreover, a high priority to providing information to other countries, in particular those countries that have concluded free-trade agreements with the Community and in which the need exists for information about European standardisation and related issues;
23. Advocates greater visibility to the business community of the Commission unit responsible for processing complaints from businesses in connection with the continuing failure by some Member States to comply;
24. Supports the Commission in its request to CEN, Cenelec and ETSI to allow an independent assessment of the financing of the European standardisation process to be conducted;
25. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

6. Euro-Mediterranean partnership in transport sector

A4-0438/98

Resolution on the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament concerning the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in the Transport Sector (COM(98)0007 – C4-0102/98)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament concerning the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership in the Transport Sector (COM(98)0007 – C4-0102/98),
 - having regard to Parliament's resolution of 12 June 1992 on transport in the Mediterranean ⁽¹⁾ and its resolutions of 14 May 1998 on the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreements ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the Communication from the Commission on connecting the Union's transport infrastructure network to its neighbours (COM(97) 0172), the final Declaration of the third Pan-European Transport Conference in Helsinki, and its resolution on the follow-up to the said Conference,
 - having regard to the decision of 15 September 1998 by the Barcelona process Euro-Mediterranean committee, agreeing to the organisation of a Euro-Mediterranean transport forum,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Transport and Tourism and the opinions of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Security and Defence Policy and the Committee on External Economic Relations (A4-0438/98),
- A. having regard to recent developments in transport policy, and to the support given by the meeting of the European Council in Cardiff to the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership,
- B. whereas it is necessary to define more clearly, on the basis of the strategy outlined by the common transport policy, the Pan-European Transport Conference and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, the instruments and organisational resources available to the Commission for furthering the process of integration between the European Union and third countries in the Mediterranean basin,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 176, 13.7.1992, p. 250.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 167, 1.6.1998, p. 196.