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(Information)

COUNCIL

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

of 1 March 2002

on standardisation

(2002/C 66/01)

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

recalls its Resolution of 28 October 1999 on the role of standardisation in Europe ⁽¹⁾;

welcomes the interim report ⁽²⁾ from the Commission on the implementation of the Resolution and the progress reflected in that report;

reaffirms the important role of standardisation for the internal market and its growing contribution to different policies and actions such as governance in the EU, e-Europe, the strategy for sustainable development, and global trade and

ADOPTS THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS:

With regard to the principles of standardisation and the responsiveness of European standardisation to market needs,

the council

notes the progress made by the European standards bodies in diversifying their products range;

encourages the European standards bodies however to work further on a graduated system of standardisation products, relating them to market needs and providing information so as to attract new customers, and analysing how to transform products other than formal standards into formal standards where appropriate;

reiterates its request to the Commission, on the basis of progress made, to continue its reflections on a Community framework of principles for the use within Community policies of specifications other than formal standards, taking into account how the features of specific products make those products suitable for certain policy purposes and unsuitable for others;

reaffirms the appropriateness of harmonised standards in areas covered at present by the new approach;

welcomes the intention of the commission to develop a paper on standardisation and the protection of the environment.

Regarding the role of public authorities

the Council

reiterates the need for public authorities to acknowledge the strategic importance of standardisation, in particular by maintaining a stable and transparent legal, political and financial framework, in which standardisation can further evolve, and for national standards bodies to continue to support the functioning of the European standardisation infrastructure and the attainment of common European objectives;

notes with satisfaction that the Community has started to apply the principles of the new approach in new areas and that the Commission has launched a review of certain aspects of the new approach, and encourages the Commission to further explore the potential of the new approach both within the Community and at the international level, systematically identifying both opportunities and any limitations to be addressed.

With regard to the efficiency of the European standardisation system,

the Council

welcomes the initiatives of the European standards bodies to increase their efficiency, especially as regards shortening the time taken to produce standards, and calls for an analysis of the results of the initiatives undertaken, inviting them to exchange best practices;

welcomes the coming into being of the first harmonised standards for construction products and requests the European standards bodies and all interested parties to follow closely progress on standardisation work in support of European legislation with the aim of completing the harmonisation programme;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 141, 19.5.2000, p. 1.

⁽²⁾ COM(2001) 527 final — 12172/01 MI 139 ECO 255 + COR 1.

invites the Commission to complete its analysis of standardisation mandates to allow for a better preparation and monitoring of relevant standardisation work, and to present to the Council the results of the study launched by the Commission on the overall impact of standardisation, as well as the results of other relevant studies;

stresses the importance it attaches to the ability of all relevant interested parties to participate effectively in standardisation, *requests* that national standards bodies ensure the involvement of such parties in the process at national level, and *invites* the European standards bodies to foster the exchange of information with the relevant interested parties at European level.

With respect to the financing of a viable European standardisation system,

the Council

takes note of the studies undertaken by some of the European standards bodies and *invites* proposals to address future challenges, including an analysis of how standardisation products and services satisfy the needs of industry;

considers however that the viability of the overall standardisation system in Europe remains far from secure in the light of a rapidly changing European and international environment and of changes in the traditional sources of income;

reiterates its requests therefore to the national and European standards bodies and public authorities to examine ways in which that viability can be better assured;

invites Member States to give constant consideration to the resources provided to European standardisation, either directly or via support to national standardisation;

invites the Commission to analyse the costs and benefits of Community financial support to European standardisation and how such support could be better targeted in order to contribute to the stability of the financing of European standards bodies.

Concerning the enlargement of the EU and the international dimension of standardisation

the Council

notes with satisfaction the progress made by the candidate countries and their national standards bodies in becoming

full members of the European standardisation system; and *calls on* the Member States to complement Community technical assistance in this regard and to share information on national assistance schemes for this purpose;

welcomes the results of the second triennial review of the WTO/TBT Agreement in particular in relation to principles for the development of international standards to be used under the Agreement; *emphasises* the importance of technical assistance, including for the effective implementation of the Agreement amongst all WTO members, and *calls on* Member States to share information on national assistance schemes with the Commission and the Community's trading partners;

welcomes the Commission staff working paper on European policy principles on international standardisation ⁽¹⁾, and *invites* other interested parties, in particular from the Member States, EFTA, and the candidate countries to use this document for guidance in their respective dealings, recalling the long-standing cooperation and common standardisation policy objectives with the EFTA States;

invites the Commission and the Member States to continue the promotion of standards-respective regulatory models with the Community's trading partners, such as those developed by the UN/ECE, and to continue supporting the implementation of appropriate measures by third countries and other regions such as the Euromediterranean region, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Mercosur and Asian regions.

With regard to the ongoing measures being taken by the Commission, by the European standards bodies and their members and by the Member States,

the Council

requests the Commission to present a further report by June 2003 on the actions taken pursuant to the Council Resolution of 28 October 1999;

will keep the subject of standardisation under constant review.

⁽¹⁾ SEC(2001) 1296 — 11876/01 MI 131 ECO 239.