

## III

*(Preparatory acts)*

## EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

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542ND EESC PLENARY SESSION, 20.3.2019-21.3.2019

**Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — The annual Union work programme for European standardisation for 2019'***(COM(2018) 686 final)*

(2019/C 228/10)

Rapporteur: **Elżbieta SZADZIŃSKA**

Referral	European Commission, 14.12.2018
Legal basis	Article 304 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
Section responsible	Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption
Adopted in section	7.3.2019
Date adopted in plenary	20.3.2019
Plenary session No	542
Outcome of vote (for/against/abstentions)	122/0/1

**1. Conclusions and recommendations**

1.1. The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the annual European Union work programme for European standardisation for 2019, which is an improvement on the standardisation package of 2011. Although work on this initiative will be completed in 2019, the annual programme proposes areas of focus for its final year of implementation by the current Commission.

1.2. Each year, the Committee draws up an opinion setting out its observations and recommendations on the Commission's annual work programmes, as it recognises the importance of standards for boosting competitiveness in the single market and developing innovative products and services, and for increasing their quality and safety for the benefit of consumers, businesses and the environment <sup>(1)</sup>. The current opinion is linked to the opinion on 'harmonised standards' <sup>(2)</sup>.

1.3. The EESC sees progress towards ensuring the inclusiveness and transparency of the European standardisation system through the active participation of the organisations referred to in Annex III of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012. The participation of civil society representatives in the standardisation system should not be limited to the EU and national level. Their participation in international standardisation should also be supported, expanded and promoted.

1.3.1. The Committee welcomes the steps taken by the Commission to support stakeholders' participation in standardisation work, especially through the Horizon 2020 programme. Nonetheless, the EESC recommends that the existing mechanism be strengthened and that communication about such possibilities be improved. This will enable small and medium-sized enterprises not only to help draw up standards, but also to implement them.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 197, 8.6.2018, p. 17; OJ C 75, 10.3.2017, p. 40; OJ C 34, 2.2.2017, p. 86; OJ C 303, 19.8.2016, p. 81.

<sup>(2)</sup> INT/879 – Harmonised standards, Larghi, 2019 (see page 78 of this Official Journal).

1.3.2. Consistency between European and international standards will help strengthen the competitive position of EU industry in the global value chain. The Committee therefore supports the Commission's dialogue with international standardisation organisations as well as with the WTO and other international fora. In this context, the Committee supports any efforts and initiatives by the Commission to step up the standardisation process and make it more effective so that better European standards can be protected and promoted at international level <sup>(3)</sup>.

1.4. The European standardisation system is based on a public-private partnership. Key orientations for its future development were set out in the Commission's annual work programme. The Committee hopes that the partnership will encompass the widest possible range of stakeholders.

1.5. The inter-institutional dialogue fed into this year's work programme and, in the Committee's view, further dialogue in future will help strengthen the European standardisation system. Even in its earlier opinions on standardisation, the Committee expressed its willingness to set up an ad hoc forum that would involve a wide range of stakeholders <sup>(4)</sup>.

1.6. The programme identifies areas that are relevant from the point of view of standardisation: energy, circular economy, defence, security, the internal market, the digital single market and international cooperation. The EESC regards the choice of these areas as appropriate.

1.7. The Committee looks forward to the results of the study on the economic and societal impacts of standardisation. According to the Committee, the study should also take account of standardisation's indirect effects, such as employment <sup>(5)</sup>. Furthermore, an *ex post* assessment should play an important role in drawing up standardisation strategies and programmes.

1.8. The Committee reiterates its call for monitoring the efforts of key standardisation players, which are aimed at involving the broadest possible range of stakeholders in the European standardisation system. The EESC could, in particular, create an ad hoc forum on inclusiveness in the European standardisation system. This body would be responsible for organising an annual public hearing to evaluate progress made in this area <sup>(6)</sup>.

## 2. European Commission proposals

2.1. In line with Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012, the Commission has published a communication setting out the annual European Union work programme for European standardisation for 2019.

2.2. Strategic priorities for European standardisation in support of EU legislation and policies:

- Action in support of the digital single market strategy;
- Action in support of the Energy union and climate;
- Action in support of the EU circular economy action plan;
- Action in support of a deeper and fairer internal market with a strengthened industrial base;
- Action in support of the European defence action plan;
- Action in support of the space strategy for Europe;
- Action in support of the European agenda on security.

2.3. In addition, the Commission will:

- continue to work with international standardisation bodies;
- develop the public-private partnership, involving a wide range of stakeholders;
- study the economic and societal impact of standardisation.

<sup>(3)</sup> INT/879 – Harmonised standards, Larghi, 2019 (see page 78 of this Official Journal).

<sup>(4)</sup> OJ C 303, 19.8.2016, p. 81; OJ C 75, 10.3.2017, p. 40; OJ C 197, 8.6.2018, p. 17.

<sup>(5)</sup> OJ C 197, 8.6.2018, p. 17.

<sup>(6)</sup> OJ C 197, 8.6.2018, p. 17.

2.4. In accordance with Article 24(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 on submitting a report on the implementation of the Regulation, the Commission will launch a review of the European standardisation system in order to evaluate its performance.

2.5. The Joint Initiative on Standardisation (JIS) is due to be completed in 2019. The Commission will analyse the results of the JIS in three categories:

- Awareness, education and understanding about the European standardisation system;
- Coordination, cooperation, transparency and inclusiveness;
- Competitiveness and international dimension.

### 3. General comments

3.1. The 2019 annual work programme sets out in more detail, and adds to, the priorities already being implemented. The objective here is to adapt the European standardisation system to the changing international situation and challenges in the global market.

3.2. The Committee agrees with the Commission that standardisation will help support the Digital Single Market strategy by focusing on the internet of Things, big data, blockchain, intelligent transport systems and autonomous driving, smart cities, accessibility, e-Government, e-Health and artificial intelligence (AI). Furthermore, in accordance with the rules on protection of personal data (GDPR) <sup>(7)</sup>, new standardisation should be compatible and interoperable.

3.2.1. The Committee hopes that, in line with the GDPR regulation, all participants in the digital single market will be afforded a high level of protection and security for their personal data.

3.3. The Committee believes that existing safety standards and legislation in this area should be updated, particularly in the light of the new risk posed. New standards should be expected to reduce the negative impact of robots and AI on human life <sup>(8)</sup>.

3.4. Cybersecurity requirements should ensure that new devices associated with AI do not pose risks to users, such as large-scale cyber-attacks, the tracking of consumers and hacking. With its permanent mandate, the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA) should play a key role in meeting that objective, with special regard to standardisation in the area of cybersecurity <sup>(9)</sup>.

3.5. The Committee backs the proposal to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the transport sector. This should be supported by, among other things, more efficient use of fuel and energy by cars, which will help lower costs for users. At the same time, the growing number of automated cars will require harmonised regulation, since these vehicles entail a high risk (cyber-attacks, data protection, liability in the event of an accident) <sup>(10)</sup>.

3.5.1. The Committee has already expressed its support for the third mobility package in an earlier opinion, recognising it as a step towards sustainable mobility for Europe <sup>(11)</sup>.

3.6. The proposal on tyre labelling <sup>(12)</sup> and the greening of the shipping sector through the use of alternative fuels, as well as the expansion of the ecodesign requirements <sup>(13)</sup> to new categories of products can all, in the Committee's view, help tackle climate change.

3.7. The Committee supports the development of standards on the circular economy, which will contribute to sustainable production and, in connection with that, to the conservation of natural resources <sup>(14)</sup>.

<sup>(7)</sup> OJ C 81, 2.3.2018, p. 102.

<sup>(8)</sup> OJ C 288, 31.8.2017, p. 1.

<sup>(9)</sup> OJ C 227, 28.6.2018, p. 86.

<sup>(10)</sup> OJ C 62, 15.2.2019, p. 254; OJ C 62, 15.2.2019, p. 274.

<sup>(11)</sup> OJ C 62, 15.2.2019, p. 254.

<sup>(12)</sup> OJ C 62, 15.2.2019, p. 280.

<sup>(13)</sup> OJ C 345, 13.10.2017, p. 97.

<sup>(14)</sup> OJ C 264, 20.7.2016, p. 98; OJ C 367, 10.10.2018, p. 97; OJ C 283, 10.8.2018, p. 61; OJ C 62, 15.2.2019, p. 207.

3.8. Technical standards facilitate the implementation of innovative solutions in industry.

3.9. The Committee agrees with the Commission that the development by the European Defence Agency and European standardisation organisations of an action plan for standardisation in the area of defence should help ensure an open and competitive EU market for defence equipment <sup>(15)</sup>. Similar work will be undertaken in the field of space <sup>(16)</sup>.

3.10. Steps should be taken to ensure consistency between European and international standards and to promote the application of European standards outside the EU. To this end, the Commission should step up policy dialogue with international standardisation bodies and bilateral negotiations with countries outside Europe.

3.11. The Committee supports the Commission's perfectly legitimate intention to demonstrate the positive impact of inclusiveness on the quality of standardisation. The participation in standardisation work of the organisations referred to in Annex III creates added value by increasing competitiveness, and benefits society as a whole.

3.12. The Committee reiterates its call for monitoring the efforts of key standardisation players, which are aimed at involving the broadest possible range of stakeholders in the European standardisation system. The EESC could, in particular, create an ad hoc forum on inclusiveness in the European standardisation system. This body would be responsible for organising an annual public hearing to evaluate progress made in this area.

Brussels, 20 March 2019.

*The President*  
*of the European Economic and Social Committee*  
Luca JAHIER

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<sup>(15)</sup> OJ C 288, 31.8.2017, p. 62.

<sup>(16)</sup> OJ C 62, 15.2.2019, p. 1.