

INFORMATION ON INVOLVEMENT OF CONSUMERS IN STANDARDIZATION THE CZECH REPUBLIC - 2011

The Czech Consumer Association (SCS) focuses on enhancing consumer involvement in standardization on a long term basis, with a view to reach a systematic, permanent and regular participation. Two years ago SCS established the Cabinet for Standardization, a Public Service Company, whose main objective is to increase the effectiveness of the above mentioned effort. Information on activities of the Cabinet has been presented on several Czech, as well as international platforms (ANEC, ISO COPOLCO).

While within the first year (2010) the Cabinet's operation was funded by the Norway Grants, in 2011, the Cabinet had to cover its activities by means of its own financial resources since it did not obtain more significant support from public funds. Nevertheless, the Cabinet has been able to ensure sustainability in its work and manage to carry out a number of important projects with financial support of its founder - SCS. As of the beginning of 2012, the Cabinet will recruit a full time staff member to ensure the day to day tasks of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet Steering Committee assists in prioritising the tasks of the Cabinet and also participates in some of its activities. The Committee not only consists of representatives from several consumer associations but also from other crucial stakeholders such as testing laboratories, the accreditation body, the national standardization body, small and medium enterprises and some others. SCS concluded some important partnership agreements which recognized the Cabinet as a coordination centre for all areas of participation in standardization. These partners are the National Council of the Disabled, the Czech Retirement Association and also the Association of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises. This has increased the credibility of the Cabinet which is an important asset for further development of the consumers' participation in standardization.

The main activities carried out in 2011 are briefly described hereunder:

- **Cabinet website** (www.top-normy.cz) is kept up to date and continuously developed (only in the Czech version).
- **Safe and harmless to health child footwear:** The Cabinet issued a printed booklet which aims to explain parents how to choose child footwear; we support the Czech quality mark "Shoes for your children" with the logo of a "giraffe"). During a podiatric seminar „Medical Fairs - Brno 2011” the Cabinet organized a special session devoted to the role of European standards in respect to safe and harmless to health child footwear.
- **Safety of playgrounds:** SCS and the Cabinet developed a new quality mark „Playgrounds-Sportfields-Gyms – Verified premises“ in cooperation with other partners; it is based on a principle of voluntary certification, an accredited model of certified technical inspectors and application of European Standards. The use of this quality mark has been gradually increasing helped by some PR activities; we have also referred to the fact that the Czech market surveillance body found high number of non-conformities when they carried out some field controls of child playgrounds. The mark gives operators a guaranty that the operation of the facility is safe. The dedicated site www.overenehriste.cz has been built though it exists in the Czech version only.
- **National concept for involving weak stakeholders in standardization:** SCS / Cabinet drafted the national concept for involving of weak stakeholders in standardization, in the spirit

of the new European framework for standardization. This document was submitted to competent authorities.

- **Standards and SME:** SCS / Cabinet have published and printed a leaflet which explains why it is important to apply standards by small and medium enterprises and why SME should participate actively in the standardization. The benefit of such investment will have also a positive impact on consumers (see http://www.konzument.cz/publikace/soubory/pruvodce_spotrebitele/SCS_tech_normy.pdf; text available only in the Czech version).
- **Involvement on the national level:** During the period under the review, the Cabinet and SCS representatives have participated in various standardization activities under both state and private bodies in respect to standards development, safety and quality of products and services, etc. (Ministry of Industry and Trade, the Czech office for standards, Metrology and testing, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, Council of Quality of the CR, Czech Institute for Accreditation, Federation of the Food and Drink Industries of the Czech Republic etc.).
- **Involvement on the international level:** During the period under the review, the Cabinet and SCS have participated in other standardization activities – in Working Group ISO COPOLCO for Consumers involvement into standardization, ANEC General Assembly, ANEC Steering Committee, WG ISO 243 Safety of products, etc.

SCS and the Cabinet welcome that the EU „standardization package“ has stressed the needs for enhancing consumer participation not only on European but also on national level. We believe that the above mentioned „concept“ provides a starting point for the implementation of these principles in the Czech Republic, including ensuring adequate public resources.

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