Proposals for a first draft set of actions and pilot projects under the Joint Initiative for Standardisation

Domain 1: Awareness, Education and Understanding about the European Standardisation System

Action 1 – Study on the economic and societal impacts and benefits of standards as well as access to standards in the EU and EFTA Member States.

It is acknowledged that standards play a vital and sometimes invisible role in supporting economic growth through their role in boosting productivity, competitiveness and innovation as well as societal welfare. Also, the impacts of standards within businesses and their supply chains are less well understood. The same applies for the public sector, not always being well aware and informed about the impact of using standards in public policies The study should explore the impacts of standards on the economy and society at large, building on and taking into account existing national studies, as well as the different models currently used for financing standardisation. This study has also been asked for by the Council in March 2015 [2-3 March 2015, 6197/15 and 6715/15].

Action 2 – Linking research and innovation with standardisation

It is important to highlight the link between research, innovation and commercialisation using standardisation as early as possible in order to exploit to a maximum the outcomes of current and future research and innovation projects from, for example, Horizon2020 or from other existing technical platforms. An early in-depth analysis should be carried out of where, when and how standardisation can help to boost innovation in European innovation programs. It would also be helpful to increase the use of standards by business to foster market access for their innovation. Those standardisation deliverables supporting research and innovation projects that have been realised so far will be assessed and the development of pilot projects may also be taken into consideration.

Action 3 – Programmes for education in standardisation/Training and awareness on standardisation

Programmes of formal education and vocational training addressing standardisation and, more specifically, the European standardisation model should be further developed.. Therefore, there is a clear need to explore and promote standardisation as an element of formal education, academic & vocational training, in co-operation with Member States with experience in this area, as well as engaging academia. The development of training programmes for policy officers and experts on standardisation would also be an important element in the frame of this innovative educational project.

Action 4 – Improvement of standardisation awareness in national public authorities .

At national level, a certain lack of knowledge about the role of standards in support to regulations and public policy has been observed. It is therefore recommended to further involve public authorities in the standards setting and referencing processes. Therefore, an enhanced engagement of Member States will be a fundamental achievement; other practical measures will be envisioned, such as a common kit/toolbox/template with communication material for individual use in the Member States.

Action 5 – Aiding the implementation of the Construction Products Regulation (CPR) through standards

Pilot Project, will be reviewed following the Court's Judgement in case C-613/14.

This action will focus on mapping some of the main specificities and challenges pertaining to harmonised standards and the standardisation process for construction products. It will cultivate a common understanding on the role of harmonised standards in the CPR context; it will clarify the role of the various actors and explore the use of a simplified procedure for amending existing mandates. Furthermore, the action will enhance the process of introducing new classes and threshold levels into harmonised standards and apply collaborative efforts to ensure their timely revision and citation. This action should be in full respect of Regulation (EU)305/2011.

Domain 2: Coordination, Cooperation, Transparency and Inclusiveness

Action 6 – Improve the exchange of information and dialogue with industry through a Standards Market Relevance Roundtable ("SMARRT")

From the side of many actors of the system, the need for a better exchange of information, more transparency and dialogue to enhance the effectiveness of the legislator's use of the European Standardisation System has been strongly called for. To achieve this result, and in line with Article 12 of Regulation (EU)1025/2012, an adequate consideration of market relevance, in addition to public policies and regulation is needed. In order to look at improvements for market relevant testing of European standardisation policy planning, a roundtable will be established between the European Commission and industry, called: "Standards MArket Relevance Round Table", "SMARRT". This Roundtable will meet on a regular basis in full transparency, for example, during the development of draft standardisation requests, prior to Committee on Standards meetings, to offer market relevant opinions.

Action 7 – Optimisation of operational aspects of Regulation (EU)1025/2012

It is important to use the planning instruments and tools at EU level to their full extent to effectively support policy objectives. Stakeholder collaboration and coordination are fundamental for optimised support to EU policy priorities and for the effectiveness of these instruments. An analysis of the available planning instruments for standardisation at EU level and a gathering of best practices as evidence to support EU policy objectives would help to clarify the different roles, responsibilities, processes, objectives and deliverables, and would contribute to better plan further actions (e.g. complementary coordination actions).

Action 8 – Provide high-quality standards delivered and referenced in a timely manner

The strong call for standards/specifications issued when the market/regulations/public policies need them and when the users of the standards are ready to implement their requirements or use them in the legislation is an undeniable need expressed by the actors of the system - be it policy makers, industry or society – a challenge which has to be tackled through collaborative processes: improvement of performance in terms of quality and timeliness over the entire life cycle of European standards linked with policy and regulations, ensuring that the roles and competences of each actor remain preserved, in respect of the European and Member State regulations.

Action 9 – Inclusiveness, transparency & effective participation of all stakeholders in the European Standardisation System

An increased awareness of the role of Annex III organisations would strengthen the system, as well as increase their contribution during the development of standards, and to overcome additional obstacles at international level. In order to promote a real and effective inclusiveness of the European Standardisation System, an easy access of all interested stakeholders to national, European and international standardisation work and their effective participation should be supported through appropriate means and actions. Awareness raising actions targeted at national standards bodies and technical bodies should take place. It is also of importance that standards are market relevant and reflect the interests and needs of all stakeholders, including societal and environmental.

Action 10 – Facilitating participation of all stakeholders at national level

Enhanced participation of some existing and emerging categories of stakeholders at national level, including those representing societal and public interests (e.g national authorities including market surveillance) would bring added value to the final quality of the standardisation deliverables. As contributions from all stakeholders are considered to be pivotal in order to produce state-of-the-art standards, tools are to be developed through which participation of underrepresented categories could be extended at national level to more countries, building on existing best practices.

Action 11 – Increased use of standards in Public Procurement to better implement the public procurement Directives

Pilot Project:

Currently, there is a rather low use of standards in Public Procurement, which means that suppliers face numerous, different requests and various definitions in the "suppliers documents", resulting in higher costs and inefficiency in procurement. Approximately, 2 % of goods and services in public procurement cross the borders today in the EU. Therefore, practical and concrete actions should be envisaged, such as a guide, for how to use standards in combination with the new procurement directive. In order to improve the current situation, it would also be important to find out how Member States deal with the use of standards in public procurement in terms of structure, tools, guides, education etc. A study or analysis could be considered in that context.

Domain 3: Competitiveness and International dimension

Action 12 – Encouraging the greater development and use of European service standards to help integrate Europe's service markets

Both the 2006 Services Directive and Regulation (EU)1025/2012 on European standardisation recognise the potential benefits of service standards to increase market transparency, raise quality and safety, and facilitate market access for businesses and consumers. Indeed, there is untapped potential for service standards in Europe, respecting national and European regulations.. While their number is growing, most existing and newly emerging services standards are national (fewer than 20% of existing service standards are European). This action will look to promote where appropriate the increased development and use of market driven European service standards to benefit European businesses and consumers through increasing market transparency, improving the quality of offer, facilitating market access, and promoting the greater provision of product-service packages.

Action 13 – Promote the European regulatory model supported by voluntary standards and its close link to international standardisation in third countries.

Considering it is widely recognised as a success story and a best practice, the European regulatory model ["New Approach" (NLF)-type legislation] could be promoted outside the EU and EFTA Member States. This means that a common effort by all the actors of the system would be needed: stakeholders should consider promoting globally the concept of common regulatory objectives in international trade negotiations. In addition, these efforts will also help in supporting the interests of European SMEs in international standardisation processes, e.g. by promoting best practices for SMEs at ISO and IEC level.

Action 14 – Standardisation to support digitisation of European industry

Digitisation of European industry and services represent an important opportunity for the growth of the European businesses and for the society, as well as an important milestone in the context of achieving a Digital Single Market.

Industry in Europe has had longstanding leadership in factory automation and intelligent manufacturing technologies. Currently, digitisation of industry and services and the application of cognitive technologies set connections across sectors as well as throughout the value chain, from the innovator to the manufacturer and from provider to the consumers. This is a push for innovation and technology integration throughout the value chain.

The EC package on "Digitising of European Industry" as well as several initiatives at Member State level and within industry federations recognise that standardisation has an important role to play, helping European industry in securing their leadership in manufacturing and service provision adapting best available digital technologies, amongst other benefits: "An effective standardisation environment for digital technologies is crucial for Digitising European Industry, and is key for the Digital Single Market. ICT standards allow devices and services to connect seamlessly across borders and technologies. In the future, billions of connected devices - including appliances, industrial equipment, and sensors – depend on such seamless communication, regardless of manufacturer, technical details, or country of origin."

The smart collaboration between CEN, CENELEC and ETSI, together with industry actors, EC/EFTA Member States and other international and global organisations and initiatives, can pave the way for promoting an effective set of standards, taking into account existing ones available at European and global level, resulting in an efficient support to digitisation of industry.

This action is looking at how to best support the EU policy objectives, as, for example, outlined in the EC package on "Digitising of European Industry".

Action 15 – Improve the representation of the interests of SMEs in Europe in international standardisation processes

Pilot Project:

Standards drafted by international standards' bodies, such as ISO and IEC, are more and more important on the global markets. They are increasingly transposed as Harmonised Standards in Europe to prove presumption of conformity with EU legislation. SMEs from Europe should have their voices better heard in international standardisation, based on the improvements that have been made at European level. International standards that meet the needs of SMEs in Europe contribute to enhancing their competitiveness. While the presence of SMEs and their associations is already improving at European level, more should be done to ensure appropriate representation and effective participation in international standardisation processes, building on existing best practice; this could also be extended to the other societal stakeholders under the Annex III of Regulation (EU)1025/2012. There is, hence, room for more coordinated strategies and joint efforts by European stakeholders and National Standardisation Bodies to influence the processes at ISO and IEC - both at the technical and policy - level. Also, best practices for SMEs at the international level could be promoted for the benefit of SMEs in Europe, where appropriate with the help of national standardisation bodies. These best practices can also benefit to the other societal stakeholders, Annex III Organisations.