

Enhancing employer participation in European standardisation

Position paper on the planned revision of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 on European standardisation (EU Standardisation Regulation)

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Summary

The Commission plans to present a proposal for the revision of the EU Standardisation Regulation in the third quarter of 2026. In this proposal, employers must finally be given equal consideration as social partners. The current Regulation explicitly mentions only the workers' side. Employers should be included in the revised Regulation as representatives of the public interest. Furthermore, it must be clearly stipulated that in-house human resources work does not fall within the scope of service standardisation. It is part of the protected remit of the social partners. Neither management standards nor new standardisation mandates – for example under the AI Regulation – must encroach upon this area. Faster standardisation procedures can strengthen European competitiveness. However, this must not be at the expense of quality, transparency or broad participation of all relevant stakeholders. Simplified procedures, alternative standardisation products or open-call models can restrict participation rights. In doing so, they jeopardise the legitimacy of European standards. The EU needs standards that are based on broad expertise and are socially accepted. The revision of the Standardisation Regulation offers an opportunity to permanently safeguard equality, constitutional principles and the sustainable quality of European standardisation.

In detail

Anchor employers as social partners in European standardisation

The EU Standardisation Regulation must recognise employers as social partners. Currently, it mentions only the employee side. This excludes employers from equal participation and contradicts Article 152 TFEU, which protects social partnership. This is particularly evident in recitals 12, 17 and 22, as well as in Article 5 of the Regulation. All these provisions are directed exclusively at employees. This falls short because employers also represent the public interest and must therefore be clearly named in the Regulation. At the same time, European standardisation is increasingly encroaching on in-house human resources management. This applies, for example, to standards on human resource management or occupational

health and safety standards. Against this backdrop, employers need a significantly stronger and more established role in European standardisation.

Clearly exclude HR management from the scope of service standardisation

The scope of service standardisation must be clearly defined. It must not include in-house human resources management. In Germany, this is a constitutionally protected area of regulation for the social partners. Neither service standards nor management system standards nor new standardisation mandates must interfere here. This constitutional reality, which is practised in many Member States, should be explicitly enshrined in Recital 12 on products and processes. In addition, it requires clear regulation in a new article of the revised Regulation.

Speeding up standardisation processes – whilst maintaining quality, transparency and participation

Faster standardisation procedures should only be permitted if established principles are upheld. Stricter deadlines and the use of simplified procedures by European and national standardisation organisations must not compromise the quality of standardisation work, nor transparency and participation rights. Accelerated procedures can strengthen the competitiveness of the European standardisation system. Nevertheless, European standards still require broad expert knowledge. They must be accepted by industry, academia and society. Decisions on the duration of the development process – including in so-called fast-track procedures – must therefore remain the responsibility of the standardisation bodies. Control over content and working methods must remain at expert level. Simplified procedures may only be used if key standardisation principles, such as transparency, broad participation and consensus, are fully respected. They are not suitable for changes to the substance of standards, e.g. the adaptation of technical requirements, the introduction of new test steps or the modification of evaluation criteria.

Preserving European standardisation structures and participation rights

The EU should refrain from using alternative standardisation products. This applies, for example, to the European Agile Specification (EAS) from CEN/CENELEC or to products from other organisations that are not recognised as European standardisation organisations within the meaning of the Standardisation Regulation. All these instruments shorten the procedures. In doing so, they weaken the participation rights of societal and social stakeholders. Standardisation products from the Commission outside established structures can circumvent tried-and-tested participation and consensus mechanisms. This reduces both the acceptance and the quality of the results. Standardisation mandates to organisations outside the recognised European standardisation structures should remain the exception. The same applies to the adoption of external standardisation products. Both may only take place within the framework of existing international cooperation mechanisms. These include, in particular, the Vienna and Frankfurt Agreements on the mutual recognition of standards. So-called open-call procedures, i.e. public tenders, should also be viewed critically. They can undermine existing participation rights and nullify established procedures. Standardisation mandates may therefore only be awarded to organisations that reliably adhere to the

fundamental European principles of standardisation work. These include inclusivity, transparency, consensus and public consultation. Equally important is the equal participation of the social partners.

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