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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Increasing European leadership in international standardisation

Delegations will find in Annex a Presidency note on *Increasing European leadership in international standardisation* in view of the meeting of the Working Party on Technical Harmonisation (Attachés) on 13 October 2023.

Increasing European leadership in international standardisation*Working Party on Technical Harmonisation (Standardisation)**13 October 2023***A. BACKGROUND**

Globalisation is a reality of the framework of existing trade and business activities worldwide. Global markets are more open in the digital era and borders no longer exist for products and services. In parallel, standard-setting at international level has proven to be a tool for increasing market deployment and roll-out of strategic and emerging technologies globally. It also contributes to the different elements of open strategic autonomy, such as supply chain resilience (e.g. hydrogen standards), national/economic security (e.g. cybersecurity standards), technological leadership and competitiveness (e.g. electric mobility standards), while adhering to the EU's democratic values and interests (e.g. AI standards). This reality means that standards are a critical element in global market access and inter-regional trade flows and that EU stakeholder engagement is absolutely critical to allow the EU's global competitiveness.

The United States is firmly committed to defend their interests and reinforce a leadership position at international level¹, often building coalitions with PASC countries. Already launched in 2018, China, through its The China Standards 2035 strategy, empowered Chinese enterprises to participate in standardisation. Five years later ISO, IEC and ITU-T have received plenty of Chinese proposals for new areas of activity, mainly focused on emerging technologies, with the objective of leveraging Chinese standards along the Belt and Road initiative and beyond. This shows that other regions have increased their investment in international standards-development.

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/US-Gov-National-Standards-Strategy-2023.pdf>

Recent examples such as standardisation in Lithium in ISO or Smart cities in ISO/IEC have shown that although **Europe has played a leadership position in international standardisation, in particular in more “traditional” sectors, further efforts and actions are needed to sustain this position in the coming years, especially for emerging technologies. By establishing standards that align with their strategic objectives, interests and values, EU companies can gain a competitive edge in the global market and ensure that they compete on a level playing field.** Another reason for being closely involved in international standardisation is that there is no other region in the world with a higher level of alignment with international standards than Europe, maintaining a catalogue of standards highly based or identical to the international ones. It is clear that what has been successful during the 30 years of the Single Market needs to be reinforced strengthening the capacity of National Standardisation Bodies from the EU so that they can participate more actively and lead the development of international standards, also in emerging technologies.

Standards cooperation are presently part of the Trade and Technology Council with the US² and with India, subject to bilateral cooperation mechanism with China and with Japan and are part of the free trade agreements’ chapter dealing with technical barriers to trade.

² In the framework of the EU -United States Trade and Technology Council (TTC), working group 1 on technical standards, information is being exchanged on standardisation activities on artificial intelligence, quantum, fast electric charging systems for heavy duty vehicles, additive manufacturing and other emerging technologies. Key outcomes in this regard, such as the recognition of the Megawatt Charging System for electric heavy-duty vehicles, standards for additive manufacturing (3D printing) that bear three logos (ISO, CEN, ASTM) and a 6G outlook including standards are included in the TTC joint statement adopted in May 2023.

The European standardisation strategy³ extensively highlighted this aspect and called for the EU and its Member States (MSs) to promote a more strategic approach to international standardisation activities. In order to monitor, share information, coordinate and strengthen the European approach to international standardisation, the strategy asks the Commission to set up a coordination mechanism with Member States and National Standardisation Bodies.

Following the presentation of the Commission's Standardisation Strategy in February 2022, the **High-Level Forum on European Standardisation**⁴ was launched in January 2023. Thematic discussions on strategic areas for standardisation, covering many of the above subjects, have started and include a targeted international standardisation assessment and recommendations per technology area. The High-Level Forum will meet again in the end of November 2023 to take stock of progress.

³ An EU Strategy on Standardisation - Setting global standards in support of a resilient, green and digital EU single market [COM\(2022\) 31](#)

⁴ It brings together up to 60 members from EU/EEA countries, European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs), industry, civil society and academia to identify standardisation priorities in support of EU policies and legislation.

B. PROPOSAL OF QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE AND REFLECTION

1. Based on the strategic approach of standardisation in the European Union and in particular the detected need to reinforce the European leadership in international standardisation, **how can Member States promote the participation of their experts in their National Standardisation Bodies and where appropriate lead the works of key areas where Europe can have a strategic interest in standardisation at international level? Do Member States see a technology area where the lack of engagement in international standardisation can be particularly harmful?**
 2. A national overview would be essential for a well-functioning EU-level coordination mechanism. **Do Member States run an internal coordination mechanism with actors from national ministries, standardisation bodies and companies involved in standard-setting in a specific technology area or in any other way? Could the High Level Forum on European Standardisation be used for such a coordination mechanism at EU level or would Member States prefer another format?**
 3. EU Member States and the European Commission, together with National and European Standards Organizations, need also to reinforce the collaboration with the EU trade partners in technical and policy standards issues at international level. **How can this collaboration be enhanced to ensure the necessary coordination at international level?**
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