

Environmental groups welcome calls for greener standards and more balanced participation



[Brussels, 25 February 2010] - Environmental organisations, EEB [1] and ECOS [2], welcome a newly released report highlighting the need to increase involvement of environmental NGOs in standardisation [3]. The report comes after a year of deliberation by an expert panel ("EXPRESS") reviewing the European Standardisation System in view of the challenges ahead to 2020 [4].

Key recommendations from the report include wider integration of environmental aspects, improving access of societal stakeholders to the standards development process and increasing their representation. The recommendations also promote the principles of inclusion, openness, transparency and balanced representation. Societal stakeholders regularly complain about the corporate dominance in the standardisation process.

Thousands of technical standards have an impact on the daily lives of EU citizens as they provide the technical specifications used by manufacturers and public authorities to prove that a product or a process meets legislative requirements.

Ralf Lottes, Secretary General of ECOS, the voice of environmental NGOs in standardisation, and a member of the expert panel said: *"The EXPRESS report contains many valuable ideas and recommendations for the EU [5] and national governments and standardisation bodies to implement. The European Committee for Standardization (CEN) already made valuable tools available to improve such integration. Unfortunately, despite certain frontrunners and CEN's example, many National Standards Bodies have shown a complete lack of ambition in this area. I hope this will now begin to change."*

The report also recommends that Member States help improve the engagement of weaker stakeholders by providing resources for participation, since "the acceptability of standards depends to a large extent on the full involvement of all relevant parties."

Doreen Fedrigo-Fazio, EEB Policy Unit Coordinator, said: *"Environmental organisations support standardisation where it is the best regulatory option. We do, however, warn against political decisions being delegated to technical bodies where commercial interests often prevail over public interests due to the financial muscle of corporations."*

This report will be one of the elements feeding into the general revision of the legislative framework for European standardisation to be presented by the European Commission to European Council and Parliament in Spring.

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Notes for editors:

[1] The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) is a federation of over 140 environmental citizens' organisations based in most EU Member States, most candidate and potential candidate countries as well as in a few neighbouring countries. These organisations range from local and national, to European and international.

[2] The European Environmental Citizens' Organisation for Standardisation (ECOS) is an association of Environmental NGOs created to enhance the voice of the environment in the standardisation process.

It is an associate member of CEN, the European Committee for Standardization and a co-operating partner of CENELEC, the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization. Thanks to the memberships in CEN and CENELEC, ECOS has access to their technical committees and sends experts to participate in standards development work. ECOS is also a "liaison organisation" to several technical committees of ISO and IEC, CEN and CENELEC's global counterparts.

Furthermore, ECOS works on improving the framework for public interest stakeholders in standardisation. It is the only environmental organisation worldwide working to such a degree of detail and on such a wide number of issues on standardisation.

[3] <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/european-standards/standardisation-policy/policy-review/express/>

[4] What is standardisation?

Standardisation is an essential tool for implementing (EU) policy. It is the voluntary process carried out by mostly private standards bodies of developing technical specifications based on consensus among all interested parties. The areas concerned range from greenhouse gas monitoring over characterisation of waste to chemical or nanoparticle content of products. In product manufacturing standards apply to the bulk of products traded within the EU's internal market. Harmonised measurement methods are crucial to foster uniform implementation of environmental directives.

European Standardisation bodies:

CEN: <http://www.cen.eu>

CENELEC: <http://www.cenelec.eu>

ETSI: <http://www.etsi.org>

[5] Apart from the EU, also EFTA, the European Free Trade Association (<http://www.efta.int>) and its Member States contribute politically and financially to European Standardisation.