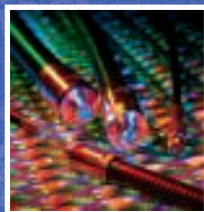


# Information Society and Standards: Linking European Policies



Information Society  
and Media



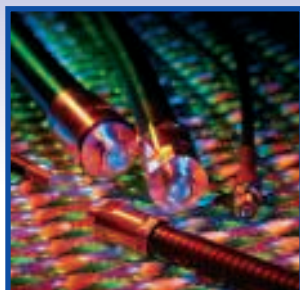
European Commission



**The Information Society brings important benefits for standardisation.**

**To help ensure this promise is fulfilled, the Information Society Policy Link initiative is linking Information Society projects with relevant European policy-makers in areas as diverse as communications standards, digital rights management, eLearning and knowledge technologies.**

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## Challenges for Standardisation

Standards are vital to Europe's competitiveness and support the implementation of EU policies. They provide a level playing field for industry, enabling companies to compete on equal terms in European and global markets. Standards also enable European legislation to be simplified, and so contribute to the EU's commitment for "better regulation".

European standards, in support of the Union's "New Approach" legislation, underpin the Single Market, and have formed the basis for more than 20 legislative acts over 15 years. They are developed through an open and transparent process, built on consensus between all interested parties, and their application is voluntary. This combination has encouraged effective partnerships between European legislators and the European standards community, including the private sector.

The "New Approach" introduced, among other things, a clear separation of responsibilities between the European legislator and the European standards bodies: CEN, CENELEC and ETSI. EU directives define the "essential requirements" that goods must meet when they are placed on the market (e.g. protection of health and safety).

The European standards bodies are then charged with drawing up the technical specifications that enable these requirements to be met. Such specifications are known as "harmonised standards".

Today, standardisation faces many challenges. We have to improve the efficiency of traditional standardisation processes and also meet demand for new types of standards. We have to respond to the increasing demand for, and rapid pace of, international (global) standardisation efforts. And we have to maintain a strong standardisation infrastructure in the enlarged Europe, while also representing our interests worldwide.

## Standardisation Glossary

### European Standards Organisations

CEN – European Committee for Standardisation ([www.cenorm.be/iss/](http://www.cenorm.be/iss/)), responsible for standardisation in areas other than the electrotechnical and telecommunications fields.

CENELEC - European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation ([www.cenelec.org](http://www.cenelec.org)), responsible for standardisation in the electrotechnical field.

ETSI - European Telecommunications Standards Institute ([www.etsi.org](http://www.etsi.org)), responsible for standardisation in telecommunications, broadcasting and certain aspects of information technology.

ICTSB – Information & Communication Technologies Standards Board ([www.ictsb.org](http://www.ictsb.org)), an informal grouping of these and other standards-related organisations.

### Key International Activities

DAVIC - Digital Audio-Visual Industry Council ([www.davic.org](http://www.davic.org))

DVB - Digital Video Broadcasting ([www.dvb.org](http://www.dvb.org))

IETF-Internet Engineering Task Force ([www.ietf.org](http://www.ietf.org))

ISO -International Standardisation Organisation ([www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org))

ITU - International Telecommunications Union ([www.itu.org](http://www.itu.org))

OMG - Object Management Group ([www.omg.org](http://www.omg.org))

The Open Group ([www.opengroup.org](http://www.opengroup.org))

MPEG - Motion Picture Expert Group (<http://mpeg.telecomitalia.com>)

W3C - Worldwide Web Consortium ([www.w3c.org](http://www.w3c.org))



## Standardisation Policy

Standardisation is an integral part of the European Union's policies to increase the competitiveness of enterprises and to remove barriers to trade.

This was confirmed by the European Parliament in 1999 and by the Council both in its Resolution of 28 October 1999 and its Conclusions of 1 March 2002 on the role of standardisation in Europe. At the same time, the Council invited the Commission to review the objectives, scope and needs of European standardisation policy.

The results of this analysis were presented in the recent Communication on the "*Role of European standardisation in the Framework of European policies and legislation*" (COM(2004) 674 final) which sets out the Commission's priorities in standardisation policy. The Communication analyses the current situation and identifies the key areas where the European standardisation system and the instruments available to European standardisation policy can and should be further improved.

The Council endorsed this Communication in December 2004. It called for a more extensive use of European (i.e. CEN, CENELEC, ETSI) and international standards in their policies. Particular attention should be paid to the role of standards in the simplification of existing EU legislation, so as to meet the needs of stakeholders, including SMEs. The Council also requested the Commission to work with Member States, European standardisation organisations and others to develop an action plan for implementing and monitoring the Communication's recommendations.

For the future, the Council invited the Commission and the Member States to make wider use of European (i.e. CEN, CENELEC, ETSI) and international standards in their policies. Particular attention should be paid to the role of standards in the simplification of existing EU legislation, so as to meet the needs of stakeholders, including SMEs. The Council also requested the Commission to work with Member States, European standardisation organisations and others to develop an action plan for implementing and monitoring the Communication's recommendations.

### Where the Information Society Meets Standards

Standards are crucial building blocks for the Information Society. They allow ICT products and services from different providers to work together, giving consumers wider choice while assuring them that systems are technically compatible. Standards also have benefits for the ICT industry, minimising the risks that an innovation is heading towards a technological "dead end". In short, standardisation provides a level playing field.

In a European and increasingly global framework, issues of interoperability, extensibility, backward compatibility and migration path are essential in ICT systems.

European collaborative research enables such issues to be addressed through international consensus-building processes. Indeed, the opportunity to influence the evolution of standards – European open standards adopted worldwide – is a strong motivation for industry to participate in European research projects.

Coordination among European standards and similar bodies is provided through the ICT Standards Board (ICTSB), an informal body gathering together the three recognised European standards organisations and other specification providers. The ICTSB maintains a dialogue with the Commission and links standardisation with research activities for mutual benefits: state-of-the-art in standardisation and increased market relevance of standardised solutions based on research projects.

## Information Society Activities

### IST Research

The IST Programme reinforces the links to standardisation and industrial forums to ensure coherence in EU-wide technology deployment and in the creation of new open frameworks for fair competition and fast innovation.

Examples are found across the Programme. Under FP5, they included working groups and task forces on issues such as IPv6, biometric security, and interoperability of business systems. The Programme also sponsored independent organisations that promote consensus in areas such as mobile communications, and transport information infrastructure. In addition, projects and project clusters provided European contributions to standardisation bodies (e.g. ETSI, CEN/CENELEC, ITU working groups) and to industry consensus frameworks (e.g. DAVIC, DVB, OMG, IEFT, W3C).

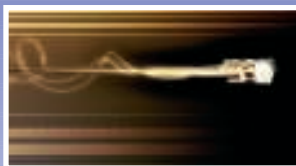
Under FP6, IST projects continue to play key roles in terms of consensus building, standard setting as well as contributions to regulatory frameworks. A new support measure, COPRAS, aims to improve the IST Priority's input to standardisation activities as well as support eEurope objectives. Standards-related actions are also a key aim of many Integrated Projects.

### Other Activities

eTEN focuses on the deployment of eServices at a European scale. Since one of its aims is to overcome the fragmentation between national markets, standardisation is essential to ensure projects have the necessary European reach. Its selection criteria therefore emphasize issues such as interoperability, and conformance to open standards and "existing or emerging norms".

The eContent Programme, and its follow-on eContentplus, focus on showcasing the latest digital content and services. Although not directly concerned with standardisation, by their nature many of the projects utilise the latest ICT standards emerging from European and international standardisation bodies.

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## Next Steps

The research synopses and policy cases presented here represent only the first stage in linking Information Society activities to EU policies. Information Society & Media DG is now working with partner policy DGs to establish a policy interface to improve synergies.

A virtuous circle should develop, with improved communication between researchers and policymakers ensuring that:

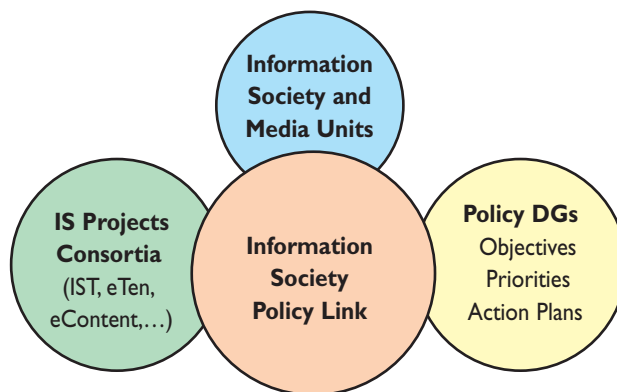
- Information Society & Media programmes better reflect relevant EU policies;
- EU policies better account for Information Society technologies;
- ICTs are better applied to meeting Europe's challenges.

At a later stage, specific actions will be launched addressing policy-makers in national and regional administrations in Member States, European institutions and national parliaments.

## Getting Involved

The *Information Society Policy Link* initiative policy-makers and researchers in a number of ways, so as to leverage the benefits of Information Society & Media projects for European policies. A variety of activities are planned, including a series of Policy Workshops and events targeted at the European policy community.

Project Consortia play a crucial role in the development of this joint effort, providing a valuable source of information for European policy-makers on relevant technological developments, as well as improving the quality, impact and awareness of their own projects for the benefit of EU policies. Organisations involved in past or present Information Society projects with relevant activities or results are invited to contact the Initiative at the address shown.



## Information Society Policy Link at a Glance

Information Society related actions constitute a considerable effort of the European Union. For instance, Information Society Technologies (IST) research has been the largest thematic priority in the EU's Fifth (1998-2002) and Sixth (2002-2006) Framework Research Programmes. Together they represent an investment of over €7bn in IST research, and are complemented by programmes such as eContent (€100m) and eTEN (€315m), which focus on digital content and eServices deployment respectively.

The projects funded by these programmes offer benefits to all areas of Europe's economy and society. To fully realise these benefits the technologies need to be linked closely to European policy-making in the relevant areas.

**Information Society Policy Link** is an initiative of Information Society & Media DG to identify and reinforce links between its projects and relevant EU policies. More than 3000 projects from Information Society programmes are being analysed, identifying a wealth of concrete results that support EU policies across all of the principal policy domains.

By exchanging information and experiences, the Information Society Policy Link initiative aims to ensure that results from European ICT research provide greater leverage, both in implementing current policies and shaping priorities for the future.

## Further Information

### Information Society Policy Link initiative

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[http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/activities/policy\\_link/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/policy_link/index_en.htm)

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Costas Andropoulos, [costas.andropoulos@cec.eu.int](mailto:costas.andropoulos@cec.eu.int)

### Europe's Information Society: Thematic Portal

[http://europa.eu.int/information\\_society/](http://europa.eu.int/information_society/)