



Immediate release

Press release

25<sup>th</sup> May 2016

## Standardisation

### European Economic and Social Committee votes for inclusiveness

**Brussels, 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016 – Today, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) plenary almost unanimously approved [rapporteur Patrick Liébus' Opinion](#) on the 2016 Annual Union Work Programme for European standardisation. This is the first time small and medium-sized companies, workers, consumers and environmental NGOs make their joint voice heard in an official document on standardisation at the EESC. The Opinion calls for better inclusion of these underrepresented players within standardisation as well as for a specific status for the organisations that represent them.**

The Opinion focuses on a particular aspect of the Union Work Programme: its inclusiveness. The EESC is the “home of civil society”. The Opinion therefore draws attention to the fundamental need to better involve the associations representing SMEs, consumers, workers and environmental interests in the standardisation system, respectively SBS, ANEC, ETUC and ECOS (the so-called “Annex III organisations” under Regulation 1025/2012).

Standards are essential to access the Internal Market. However, historically civil society and SMEs have encountered obstacles and challenges regarding their participation in this system. So, one of the key requests of this Opinion is to give the four Annex III organisations a specific status to support their contribution to the standards making process.

**EBC President Patrick Liébus**, appointed rapporteur of this Opinion, said “I am honoured to have received the trust from the Committee on this sensitive issue. Today’s vote shows that we have reached the largest support possible for this opinion. I would like to thank all the Annex III organisations for their fundamental cooperation and contribution to the drafting process. I am sure that we will all be fully committed to making the EESC’s requests a reality.”

**SBS President Gunilla Almgren** said “We thank Mr Liébus for his commitment to integrate the concerns of SMEs in the Opinion. We especially support the proposal to establish an ad hoc Forum on the inclusiveness of the European Standardisation System. Despite accounting for over 99% of all European companies, SMEs still encounter difficulties in engaging with standardisation and remain, too often, underrepresented both at national and European level.”

**ANEC Secretary General Stephen Russell** said “ANEC is pleased to have contributed to this EESC Opinion as consumers want – and need – to play a more central role in the standardisation process. We congratulate Mr Liébus and the EESC members on their support for a fairer European Standardisation System which will be key

in achieving standards that respond to public interests as well as in aiding economic competitiveness in Europe and beyond.”

**Dr. Christophe Hauert, Advisor of ETUC**, said "It has been a pleasure for ETUC to collaborate on this EESC Opinion emphasising the need for an inclusive European standardisation system. As standardisation is increasingly extending its scope to non-technical areas of social policy, the effective participation of workers' representatives is crucial to prevent standards from encroaching upon labour laws and collective bargaining as well as to ensure good quality standards for the society at large."

**ECOS Director Laura Degallaix** remarked “The EESC Opinion sets out a visionary picture of the European Standardisation System to ensure that is able to effectively support political objectives. We applaud that the Opinion makes recommendations addressing all aspects of the system in need of improvements, from greater inclusiveness to public access to standards. We also strongly welcome the proposal to establish an ad hoc Forum allowing close monitoring of the progress on inclusiveness.”

*\*Ends\**

#### **Note to editors**

The **European Builders Confederation EBC** is the European professional organisation representing national associations of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises working in the construction sector. It was established in 1990 and is based in Brussels.

**Small Business Standards (SBS)** is the association representing European SMEs in the standardisation process at European and International levels. SBS members are national and European sectorial and interprofessional associations representing SMEs all over Europe working in and out of the EU. The work conducted under SBS is mandated and financed by the European Commission.

#### **Contacts**

**Riccardo Viaggi**, EBC Secretary General: [riccardo.viaggi@ebc-construction.eu](mailto:riccardo.viaggi@ebc-construction.eu); +32 (0)2 280 16 50; +32 (0)495 123 577

**Jenny Manin**, SBS Press and Communications Officer, +32 (0)496 520 329, [pressoffice@sbs-sme.eu](mailto:pressoffice@sbs-sme.eu)