NORMAPME contribution on the public consultation on a possible successor to the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP)

1 Introduction

While NORMAPME has contributed through the on-line survey, his document serves to clarify and expand on the responses given.

NORMAPME is the only European organisation which is exclusively devoted to the interests of Small and Medium sized Enterprises in the European standardisation system.

NORMAPME is a partner of CIP and as such has observed and participated in the success of the CIP measures.

In the past, the European standardisation system was not very accessible to SMEs, as was indicated by two separate reports, one to the European Commission entitled "Access to Standardisation"[1] and the other to CEN, called "SME access to European standardization"[2]. Through NORMAPME actions support by the CIP, the European standardization system has become more SME friendly, SMEs are better represented in the standard developing process, and SMEs are better aware of the benefits of standardization.

2 Relevance of standardisation to the CIP key issues

While the support of NORMAPMEs work in standardisation does not fall under a single specific section of the three main pillars of CIP , Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (EIP), ICT Policy Support Programme (ICT-PSP) and Intelligent Energy Europe Programme (IEE), ; support to SME friendly standards serves all three goals. Standardisation is a key element in the daily life of SMEs and touches on every aspect of doing business.

2.1 Standardisation as an engine of entrepreneurship and innovation

On one hand access to market for SMEs depends to a very large extent on the use of standards, especially when it enables their innovative products to comply with EU legislation. On the other hand, SMEs only benefit from the use of standards when these are fit for them. Standards that are not adapted to their needs can put SMEs out of business. It is extremely difficult for SMEs, especially micro enterprises (93% of European enterprises), to allocate sufficient resources to participate directly in standardisation work. SMEs being the backbone of the European economy, it appears

[1] http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/european-standards/files/standards_policy/access_to_standardisation/doc/access_to_standardisation_study_eim_en.pdf
[2] ftp://ftp.cen.eu/CEN/Services/SMEs/SME%20Web/SME%20Access%20Report.pdf

obvious to support their involvement in standardisation by funding SME associations involved in standardisation.

Standardisation is a key tool in bringing innovative products and services to the market. It streamlines the introduction to the market by removing non-technical barriers. Standardisation is a flexible, adaptable, bottom-up solution which can provide a framework for all stakeholders.

Standardisation is a vector for sharing information and technological solution through an industry-representative platform.

2.2 Standardisation as a champion of the SME in ICT development

Although the ICT sector can be seen as dominated by very large enterprises, it remains that a very large number of SMEs operates in this sector. The activities of these SMEs are strongly interrelated with the ones of large enterprises. Standardisation plays a crucial role, especially to ensure interoperability and by consequence access to the market. Participation in standardisation is a long term and costly exercise without immediate benefits.

Therefore in this context of interdependence, SME associations should be financially supported to represent the interests of their constituencies in standardisation.

2.3 Standardisation as a driving force for evolved energy use

Standardisation in eco-innovation can help SMEs bring to the market sustainable solutions, new environmental technologies, products and services that reduce the overall impact on the environment.

Standardisation plays a key role in the practical implementation of new energy efficiency projects and renewable energy applications. Interoperability of electrical vehicle chargers is but one example of practical problems which need to be resolved before a mass take up of the technology can occur. Smart meters is a similar story, where open standards will support both SMEs (users, installers) and utility companies.

3 Continued CIP support for standardization initiatives

While the achievements under the current CIP have been substantial, continued effort is needed to cement the position of the SME in the European standardisation system. While a considerable distance has been travelled towards improving the SME relevance of European standardisation, the system is by far perfect. CIP or its successor should be able to continue its support of the position of SMEs.

The existing CIP supported actions related to SMEs and standardization need to be fortified and expanded. NORMAPME therefore urges the Commission to continue the support to its activities, and in general, the support to initiatives which promote and develop an SME relevant standardization system.

About NORMAPME

NORMAPME is an international non-profit association created in 1996 with the support of the European Commission, under the full name of the "**European Office of Crafts, Trades and Small and Medium sized Enterprises for Standardisation**". NORMAPME is the only European organisation which is exclusively devoted to the interests of Small and Medium sized Enterprises in the European standardisation system.

NORMAPME represents over 12 million enterprises in all European countries, including all European Union and European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member states. Membership in NORMAPME is open to all SME organisations and other organisations that promote SME interests.