

**"Certification and Marks in Europe"
a study commissioned by EFTA
Executive Summary of the Preliminary Report, 5 October 2007**

Statement from ANEC

Following our concerns expressed at the Steering Group meeting on 16 October 2007, ANEC re-iterates its fundamental disagreement with findings 5.7 and 5.8 of the study. We regret that we will have to distance ANEC from the study if it is published with these findings unchanged.

Finding 5.7 "Consumers aren't looking for marks"

The study refers to a survey done recently by the German Electro-technical Association (VDE) and says that the survey proves the disinterest of consumers in marks. However, the survey shows the contrary: according to the survey, 63% of German consumers consider safety marks when buying electrical devices, particularly the GS mark. According to the same survey, 74% of German consumers want electro-technical products to be tested by neutral bodies. The statement also conflicts with findings from Denmark.

Although many consumers do not know the precise meaning of marks, it does not mean that they are not looking for marks. Many consumers associate these markings with 'quality' and 'safety'. This is one reason for our concern at the promotion of CE Marking on consumer products.

The study concludes in finding 5.7 that "there is little evidence that individual consumers look for marks on a product". But equally, we believe there is too little evidence to conclude that consumers are NOT looking for marks.

We propose to change the wording of the title of this section to "Are consumers looking for marks?". As findings elsewhere in the study are put in the form of a question, we see no reason why finding 5.7 should be an exception.

Finding 5.8 "Consumer organisations think marks add no value"

Again, there is too little evidence in the study to conclude this. Only one interview took place with one consumer organisation (Stiftung Warentest). The practice of Stiftung Warentest subjecting GS-marked products to safety testing is said to show that the organisation has no confidence in marks. However, to exclude such products from safety testing would violate the principles of comparative testing. It would even be irresponsible to do so as products with false GS marks enter the German market (detected abuses of GS and VDE marks on products of Chinese origin tripled from 2004 to 2006).

It is true that some marks have no value for consumers (e.g. CE marking) but the finding is far too general. We want this finding deleted from the study.

END.

ANEC in brief

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, representing and defending consumer interests in the process of standardisation and certification, also in policy and legislation related to standardisation. Our aim is a high level of consumer protection. ANEC was set up in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law. We represent consumer organisations from the European Union Member States and EFTA countries. The European Commission and EFTA fund ANEC, while national consumer organisations contribute in kind. The ANEC Secretariat is based in Brussels.