



ANEC Statement “Accessibility and Innovation”

World Standards Day 2010 Conference “Accessibility for All”
Brussels, 12 October 2010

Are standards meeting consumers’ expectations?

In 2007, the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, and of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ANEC issued a revised policy statement on Design for All calling for wider implementation of CEN/CENELEC Guide 6. On World Standards Day 2007, dedicated to the theme of “Standards and the citizens: contributing to society”, ANEC urged the European Standardisation Organisations and the European Commission to establish a more systematic approach on the needs of older and disabled people¹.

Despite the growing awareness of the need to develop inclusive policies and standards, as demonstrated by this year’s World Standards Day and the long list of standards that ANEC is currently working on, consumers with disabilities are still facing great difficulties in accessing everyday products and services.

What is missing?

In ANEC’s opinion, a change of approach is needed to allow for the use of specific technical expertise in the production of accessible products and the provision of accessible services. We believe that new concepts such as Design for All in the elaboration of standards can contribute to the development of innovative products

¹ Updated ANEC Policy Statement on Design for All - September 2007 (ANEC-DFA-2007-G-043rev)

and services. And innovation is often seen as one of the main drivers of the EU economy recovery because innovation means competitiveness. Standardisation can support innovation in creating wealth and improving the welfare of European citizens.

It is worth noting that the European countries qualified as “Innovation leaders” have also achieved the highest levels of accessibility to Information Communications Technologies (ICT) products and services, so called e-Accessibility².

Conclusions

Actions must be taken if European Standards are to serve societal needs such as accessibility and inclusion. And expertise must be available for the development of accessibility standards.

According to ANEC, the participation in the European Standardisation System of consumers and the other societal stakeholders needs to be guaranteed. The direct representation of these stakeholders at the European level underpins and safeguards the principle of national delegation in European co-regulation.

ANEC calls for an inclusive standardisation system for the elaboration of inclusive standards, based on expert advice, to serve an inclusive society.

ANEC in Brief

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, representing and defending consumer interests in the development of technical standards, in the application of certification schemes to standards, and in the creation or revision of legislation on products and services. ANEC receives funding from the European Union and the EFTA Secretariat.

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² European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS) 2009, <http://www.proinno-europe.eu/page/1-executive-summary>
EC study “MeAC – Measuring Progress of eAccessibility in Europe”, 2010, <http://www.eaccessibility-progress.eu/project/>