



Raising standards for consumers



POSITION PAPER

How standardisation can support the silver economy: Wiser standards for an ageing world

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1. Executive Summary

The 3rd European Standardisation Summit, which takes place on 11 June 2014, is dedicated to the theme of how standardisation can support the silver economy¹.

The proportion of older persons is increasing at a faster rate than any other age group². In developed countries, the proportion of older people already exceeds that of children. One fifth of the population is 60 years or older; by 2050, that proportion is expected to rise to almost a third, and there will be two elderly people to every child. Europeans reaching the age of 65 in 2050 can expect to live on average between four and five years longer than those reaching 65 today. There will be a sharp increase in the number of people surviving to the ages of 80 and 90, leading to many of them spending several decades in retirement and reaching an age where infirmity and disability are more prevalent³. Moreover, older people constitute an important market share with an unequal share of disposable incomes.

Since ANEC's foundation, accessibility, and the safety of people with disabilities and older people, have been key among its priorities. Regrettably, standards tend to focus on mainstream consumers and do not always address the needs of the older consumer⁴.

At the same time, ANEC believes standards can be suitable in making products and services safe and accessible to all consumers, whatever their age and ability. This is because standards determine the manner in which a product or a service is designed or provided, before it is placed on the market. Moreover, the development of new technologies allows standards-makers to meet the needs of all consumers in a more effective manner.

ANEC has always aimed for standards that are as inclusive as possible and for legislation that does not take into account only mainstream consumers.

As the United Nations Population Fund says "An ageing world demands wiser policies". To that, we add "wiser standards". We therefore welcome the theme of this year's European Standardisation Summit and submit our contribution by means of this position paper.

¹ <http://goo.gl/9w5IiG>

² <http://www.unfpa.org/pds/ageing.html>

³ European Commission, The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity, 2006

⁴ ANEC flag-ship campaign on the removal of the exclusion clause from the EN 60335 series of standards used to support legislation on safety of household appliances, (<http://goo.gl/Y2AXIz>)

2. Standardisation for elderly and health care services

2.1 Models of special accommodation for older people across Europe

In 2013, ANEC commissioned a study that look at the work of CEN/TC 385 PC, in developing CEN/TS 16118 "Sheltered housing - Requirements for services for older people provided in a sheltered housing scheme"⁵. This was CEN's first ever attempt to develop a standard in the social welfare field. It became clear during the progress of the work that there is a diversity of models of accommodation and care for older people across Europe that must be taken into account in future standards development.

CEN/TC 385 PC decided in June 2011 to publish a Technical Specification instead of a (full) European Standard (EN) as no consensus could be reached on the submission of the standard to Formal Vote in early 2011. The main problems were divergent existing national requirements. Considering the potential added value for users of sheltered housing, ANEC did agree to the change of deliverable, published in March 2012.

Nevertheless, ANEC believed more background information was needed about the existing national requirements on sheltered housing in order to improve the focus of future work on standardisation in relation to accommodation and care for older people.

The purpose of the study was the provision of an Information Record of models of specialist accommodation and care for older people, and the related standards, in use across the countries of the EU, the acceding and candidate countries, and the EFTA countries: Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein (38 countries in total). The scope of the project did not include assessing the quality of care, or the contents of standards and regulations.

The Information Record revealed patterns divided among Northern Europe, the Southern Mediterranean and Eastern Europe, broadly following the categorisation of provision and coverage of care services for older people in the European Commission Report, "Long-Term Care for the elderly: Provisions and providers in 33 European countries"⁶. The lack of information on standards in some Eastern European countries reflects the low level of development of specialised care facilities for older people in Eastern Europe. In Northern European countries, such as Austria, Germany, Finland, Ireland and the UK, the study reveals a range of models of supported housing and residential care options, together with evidence of standards and regulations for the premises and quality of care.

⁵ <http://goo.gl/LxTqpm>

⁶ Francesca Bettio and Alina Verashchagina, 2010

In other Northern Europe countries, such as Norway, Switzerland and the Netherlands, there is evidence of a range of models of accommodation but relatively low availability of standards for specialised housing and residential care. This may reflect a focus on innovation rather than standards, as one survey respondent suggested. It is important that standards are used to inform and raise quality levels without being seen to stifle innovation.

There is evidence of an increasing focus in Northern Europe on enabling older people to remain at home or in supported housing where they retain independence while having access to support where needed. The provision of care support to an older person in their home is affected by the culture of the country with an expectation on families to care for older relatives in some countries.

ANEC position:

Due to differences in the way sheltered housing and healthcare services are regulated across Europe, there is a risk that standards fail to set common requirements which would be applicable in all countries. However, ANEC believes the requirements given in standards on sheltered housing and healthcare services must not be lowered, so as to ensure consumers are provided with a high level of protection.

Although respecting the different national approaches to care of the elderly, standards should reflect clear safety and quality principles that must be applied. Too broad a scope or too weak requirements would allow the less professional service providers to profit at the expense of consumers.

Moreover, as service standards are different from product standards due to the intangible nature of services, and the fact that services are often performed at the interface between the supplier and customer, the overlap between the 'design aspect' and the 'service' aspect should always be taken into account as far as accessibility for older consumers is concerned. And, because service safety begins with well-trained, skilled and qualified personnel, special awareness training for service providers must be a basic requirement of any standard on care.

2.3 Service Chain for Social Care Alarms

In June 2013, the Swedish Standards Institute (SIS) submitted a proposal for the creation of a new Technical Committee to work on standards for Service Chain for Social Care Alarms. In the context of an ageing population and increasing demand for social care services in Europe, social care alarms can enable people to live longer in their own homes, contribute to independent living, and limit the costs of elderly care. However, there is a growing concern about the performance

of popular social care alarms based on non-sustainable analogue tone signalling technology. The imminent technology shift into IP (Internet Protocol) implies new investments in systems for social care alarms in the coming years.

According to the proposal, standardisation should provide the harmonisation of technology used, as well as gradual harmonisation of the service requirements for all the service chain of social care alarms. Sweden has already developed and tested a large-scale Service Chain of Social Care Alarms based on interoperable open protocols.

Although recognising the importance of alarms, especially in the current context of an ageing population and resulting increased demand for social care services in Europe, ANEC recommended reconsidering the scope of the work to avoid possible duplications. The scope suggested in the proposal for a new Technical Committee was largely covered by the work already done in CENELEC/TC 79 WG 4 on Social Alarms. More specifically, the published standards in the series, EN 50134 "Alarm systems. Social alarm systems. Local unit and controller", covers the technological aspects of social alarm systems, while TS 50134-7 "Alarm systems. Social alarm systems. Application guidelines" deals with service aspects.

ANEC position:

In light of the concerns ANEC had expressed in August 2013 regarding the possible overlap between the scope of CEN TC 431 "Service Chain for Social Care Alarms" and the work already undertaken in CENELEC TC 79 WG 4⁷, it was agreed to review the scope to better address only the services aspects. ANEC welcomes the decision to revise the scope to better cover the service specific aspects of social care alarm. We would like to stress that considered the focus area of CEN TC 431 is services, it is paramount that technical and electronic aspects - e.g. objectives 4) And 8) in the revised scope - are not dealt within the scope of CEN TC 431, as agreed at the first CEN TC 431 meeting in May 2014. We reiterate our request for clarification of the scope in view of the vote by correspondence of the CEN and CENELEC BT on the approval of the revised scope of CEN TC 431 by 17 June 2014.

We expect the CEN work to have a strong focus on consumers, aiming to give them an improved level of quality of life by enabling them to stay longer in their own homes, to remain independent and be able to participate in society. It is also essential to ensure adequate personal data protection. 'Best practice' requires a constant improvement and learning process. Such advances should be reflected in the standards.

⁷ ANEC comments (ANEC-ML-2013-0159), August 2013 on CEN BT C69/2013 (BT N 9248)

3. Age-Friendly cities, homes and environments

3.1 Systematic approach to accessibility issues in standardisation

ANEC welcomes Mandate M/473, requesting CEN, CENELEC and ETSI to include "Design for All" in relevant standardisation initiatives, as we believe it imperative that actions are taken to ensure the development of European Standards that can serve societal needs. The concept of Design for All or inclusive design means that products and services should be designed and manufactured to be usable without difficulty by as many people as possible. This is particularly important if European Standards are used to complement implementation of European and International policies, such as the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Universal access to products and services, as well as to the built environment, is essential in an inclusive society.

However it should not be forgotten that, as long ago as 1999, the European Commission highlighted the importance of Inclusion and Design for All principles in standardisation through Mandate M/283 on the safety and usability of products for older and disabled people. In 2001, ISO and IEC developed Guide 71 to provide guidance to standards writers on how to accommodate the needs of older people and people with disabilities. To comply with Mandate M/283, CEN and CENELEC decided to adopt ISO/IEC Guide 71 as a European Guide. As a result, CEN/CENELEC Guide 6 was published in 2002. Mandate M/283 required the creation of a mechanism to ensure the Guide was used and improved, and that existing standards were reviewed and amended in line with its guidance. Unfortunately, the mechanism did not prove successful as very few Technical Committees used Guide 6⁸.

ANEC position:

It is now high time for incorporation of the needs of older and disabled people to take place in the development of standards systematically. In ANEC's experience, many Technical Committees members, often ill-informed about the use of mainstream products and services by older people, tend to be reluctant to attempt to address the needs of older people through standardisation.

⁸In 2006, CEN sent out a questionnaire on the use of CEN/CENELEC Guide 6 to Technical Committees (CEN/TCs) in order to evaluate the implementation mechanism for CEN/CENELEC Guide 6. Feedback was received from around 40 CEN/TCs (out of a total of 275 CEN/TCs). CEN/CENELEC Guide 6 was considered irrelevant by most CEN/TCs and no more than 3 CEN/TCs said the Guide was used in their work.

Most older people have lower levels of disability. They are people who continue to use mainstream products and services, even if not entirely suited to their needs. It is these people who can best benefit from mainstream products and services that address their needs; that are manufactured to design for all principles. This is not a marginal market. Manufacturers will benefit from an expanded customer base and increased market share if they build to standards that require usability by people with the widest range of abilities.

Accessibility to the built environment is a main priority for ANEC. We contributed to development of an International Standard on access to the built environment⁹. However, at European level, only preparatory work took place some years ago to assess the need for European standards. It did not proceed further. We believe it urgent to start the second phase of Mandate M/420 on accessibility in the built environment.

Regardless of the political achievements marked by the issue of Mandate M/473 and the creation of the CEN "Strategic Advisory Group on Accessibility" (SAGA), ANEC remains concerned whether sufficient voluntary expertise is available to allow technical bodies to address accessibility properly in the development of their standards. Hence, we call on CEN and CENELEC members to build on the impetus of Mandate M/473 and systematically to include accessibility in their work.

ENDS

⁹ ISO/CD 21542: 2011 Building construction -- Accessibility and usability of the built environment

About ANEC

ANEC is the European consumer voice in standardisation, defending consumer interests in the processes of technical standardisation and conformity assessment, as well as related legislation and public policies.

ANEC was established in 1995 as an international non-profit association under Belgian law and is open to the representation of national consumer organisations in 33 countries.

ANEC is funded by the European Union and EFTA, with national consumer organisations contributing in kind. Its Secretariat is based in Brussels.



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