Access granted?

An inclusive approach to European standards-making

Environmental stakeholders, including ECOS, have a crucial role to play in shaping European standards that support a circular, sustainable, resilient, and competitive European economy.

Standards are voluntary tools, but they can direct entire industries or boost competitiveness by facilitating free movement of goods and services, network interoperability, communication, technological development, and innovation.

European standardisation is a key instrument for strengthening the EU Single Market. The European Commission uses technical standards to underpin legislation and provide presumption of conformity to EU law, and therefore market access. Essential legal requirements are defined in regulations, and standards define specifications for products, production processes, services, or test-methods.

Standards are therefore more than just a market tool, they directly impact people and the environment, which means an inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach that involves civil society experts is essential to develop them.

Standards can deliver for the environment

A climate neutral, resilient, and circular economy will not happen without standards developed in an inclusive way

Civil society organisations provide essential knowledge and help ensure that standards remain aligned with the EU's legislative objectives. ECOS provides the necessary environmental expertise to create a level playing field for truly environmentally friendly solutions and plays a key role in bridging EU policy requirements with technical standardisation work. With vast experience in both European and international standardisation processes, we ensure that EU policy and public interests are represented in Europe and internationally.
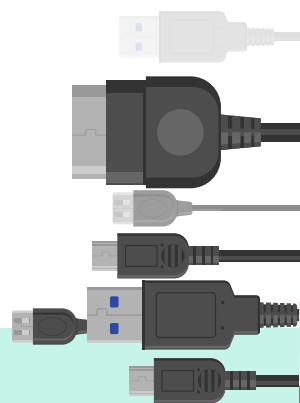

Who creates standards in the EU?

Developing standards is driven by European standardisation organisations (CEN, CENELEC, and ETSI), and dominated by industry experts

They decide if standards will accelerate technologies and processes that are more respectful of the environment - or block them, by maintaining the status quo.

Negotiation, exchanges between experts, and consensus-building are at the core of standardisation. Civil society organisations must be able to meaningfully engage and contribute **at every stage of the standardisation process**, and on an equal footing with industry representatives, to ensure that standards safeguard public interest.

Europe is ahead on inclusive standards — with further improvements within reach

The EU Standardisation Regulation legally recognises the importance of input from organisations representing environmental, social, small business, and consumer interests

But they still face barriers to meaningful participation.

Without an effective legal requirement on inclusiveness, there is no guarantee that standardisation organisations will adapt their internal processes to include experts representing the public interest. The EU Standardisation Regulation must reinforce the obligation for inclusiveness, to ensure that harmonised standards are developed with the effective participation of civil society.

How do we make standards work for Europe?

Contributing to the development of European standards requires expert knowledge and resources

Inclusive processes, supported by reliable and sufficient funding, are the only way to **ensure that civil society can participate on equal terms**, bringing balance, legitimacy, and real-life insight into standardisation, ultimately raising the quality of European standards. To bring more voices to the table and build stronger standards that work for society, the European standardisation system must:

Ensure everyone is present
Invite non-profit organisations alongside industry at all levels of standardisation.

Ensure they are welcome
Improve access, facilitate their participation, and recognise their value.

Ensure they are heard
Support effective participation in standardisation.

ECOS - Environmental Coalition on Standards

ECOS is an international NGO with a network of members and experts advocating for environmentally friendly technical standards, policies and laws. We ensure the environmental voice is heard when they are developed and drive change by providing expertise to policymakers and industry players, leading to the implementation of strong environmental principles.

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