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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Working Party on Technical Harmonisation (Attachés)
Subject:	Meeting of the Working Party on Technical Harmonisation 8 September 2023 - Presidency Summary

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Presidency Summary

The first meeting of the Council Working Party on Technical Harmonisation (Standardisation) under the Spanish Presidency of the Council on the 8 September 2023 focused on the European Standardisation System.

Based on a Presidency discussion paper with questions, representatives of the 27 Member States, the European Commission, CEN-CENELEC, ETSI, Business Europe and Small Business Standards, held a debate on the actions to take in order to encourage the involvement of different stakeholders in the European Standardisation System and for the system to maintain its relevance in the long term. Participants also expressed their views on the recent challenges for the European Standardisation System.

During the discussion, the majority of the participants were of the opinion that the system should be inclusive and that better involvement of SMEs was needed. Some Member States suggested the possibility of making use of European funding programmes as well as financial and fiscal measures at national level to incentivise the participation of industry stakeholders, including SMEs in standardisation technical committees.

Other Member States highlighted the lack of resources of the system to process the growing demand of standardisation requests in key, emerging technologies to improve the Union's competitiveness and the need to streamline the channels for the discussion of strategic topics in the field of standards. It was suggested that horizontal priorities, such as skills and education, should be part of the discussions at high level, along with topical issues on emerging technologies.

CEN-CENELEC, ETSI and Business Europe warned that, because of recent changes in standardisation policies, industry could become less interested in developing harmonised standards.

One focus of the discussion was the Advocate General's (AG) Opinion in case C-588/21, that could pose a major challenge to the system, according to CEN-CENELEC, ETSI, Business Europe and many Member States. It was stressed that if the European Court of Justice would follow the AG's opinion, that would have a negative impact on voluntary contributions from all stakeholders, weaken the public-private partnership between the European Union and the European

Standardisation Organisations and detrimentally decouple the European standardization process from the international standardization system.

The European Commission expressed caution when considering the implications of the future judgement and underlined the need for all parts of the European Standardisation System to enter into a dialogue after its publication.

The European Commission underlined the important role of the High Level Forum on European Standardisation to host strategic discussions about standardisation priorities both when it comes to horizontal and sectoral topics. Its next meeting is expected in November 2023.