Interoperability and standards

1) Introduction

- Pleased to address this assembly on this important topic which Interoperability and standards is.
- Regrets from M. Ayral
- Within DG Enterprise and Industry, Directorate C deals with Regulatory policy and standardisation in general. Brief presentation of Directorate D.
- Within the Unit D4, ICT standardisation has a prominent position; the Unit is responsible for following, from a technical point of view, ICT standardisation work for which the Commission has given financial support.

2) The role of standardisation in EU policy at large

- As you know, the role of standardisation in EU policy is increasing. Following the mid-term revision of the Lisbon strategy, the Barroso Commission has presented proposals to renew and relaunch it focussing on facilitating and speeding up the delivery of reforms needed to boost jobs and growth.

  The objective of this strategy is to mobilise a collective effort by the Commission, Member States and key stakeholders in civil society - among which certainly figure standardisers - towards a reform of the regulatory framework for enterprises, assistance for innovation and the creation of jobs. In addition, it aims at promoting areas such as research, the development of infrastructure and industrial development in general.

- All partners in the relaunched Lisbon strategy will need to work to reform regulatory policy to promote better regulation and to raise the competitiveness of European industry, along with the development of strategic industrial projects.
• There are good opportunities for European standardisation to provide significant contributions, both for better regulation and for strategic industrial projects. This has recently been confirmed by Vice-President Verheugen who said “I expect standardisation to continue to be a strength. Standardisation is contributing to the reduction of barriers to trade and to increased competitiveness. European standards makers are a major contributor to better regulation with standards being produced in support of co- and self-regulation”.

• The very positive experience of the “New Approach” has demonstrated the capability of standards to contribute to better regulation and to the integration of the internal market. The EU is strongly committed to extend its activities to further simplify its legislation, particularly in the areas of transport, security, energy, ICT and environment. More than 20 legislative acts in new areas of legislation that make reference to standards have been adopted since 1999.

3. The contribution of Standardisation to the development of industrial projects in Europe

• In the Lisbon strategy, the Commission proposed the identification of strategic sectors for the development of industrial structures. Through the concept of Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs) with Member States and industrial actors, we see standardisation policy as an element of support to this initiative.

• In particular, I see several areas of new technologies in which standards for interoperability can contribute to achieve the goals of innovation, growth and jobs. A typical example is space ICT standardisation, although here it would be necessary to move forward, especially for the GALILEO project. But we know that beyond the positioning of a series of communications satellites, the signals will have to be received and translated by equipment
on the ground. Furthermore the new Galileo infrastructure needs to be compatible with existing infrastructures, i.e. GPS and the Russian system GLONASS. All these imply that satellites, ground stations, mobile transceivers and other ICT equipment, **all based on different technologies** must communicate in a reliable, secure and user-friendly manner. These high interoperability requirements can be met only by the use of appropriate standards. I expect that standardisation in this area will generate new products and services such as earth observation

4. **Standardisation Policy**

- The European Union recognizes of the importance of the standardisation system for European industry and policies. Therefore, the Commission is committed to continue providing institutional and financial support to the 3 recognised European Standards Organisations, aiming to improve the efficiency, consistency and visibility among European stakeholders.

- The EU promotes and supports participation of all stakeholders in European standardisation activities, in particular consumers, SMEs, environmental interests and workers safety and health interests

5. **Update in European Standardisation Policy**

- Currently, we are working on a decision providing a consolidated legal basis for the financing of European standardisation

- Furthermore, on the occasion of our conference on international standardisation which will be held on this years’ World Standards Day at 14th October, we will present an Action Plan on European standardisation summarising the actions to be taken by the Commission, the Member States and the ESOs in order to implement the European standardisation policy.

6) Interoperability/standards in EU legislation: A new challenge?
• Since long EU legal Frameworks set interoperability as an objective and refer to standards as a means to achieve these objectives.
• Interoperability through standardisation is a horizontal issue; it exists in domains such as transport, construction, pipelines etc and obviously, it is a critical issue for ICT applications and services.
• As an example, the electronic signatures Directive, the telecommunication framework package Directive and Digital TV. In all cases the legislator has accepted to complement the legal Framework by a list of voluntary standards that can be used to reach the objective set.
• Interoperability through standardisation is not a new challenge for the EU legislator.
• Is it a challenge in EU policies?
• Again no, several EU policies such as the eEurope Action plan, the eHealth policy; eSafety etc, set the Interoperability issue as an objective and recommended the use of standards to increase the level of interoperability. Should be used to achieve the objectives.
• Fostering Interoperability through EU standardisation has over the last year been the major objective for the Commission’s financial support to standardisation; this will continue.

7) the ICT Sector is special and requires a focussed approach.
The ICT domain tends to be far more complex than traditional domains.
• The ICT market is characterised, amongst others, by convergence, fast developments of technologies, shift from hardware to software, global dimension; ICT technologies are pervasive. Nearly all traditional sectors use ICT technologies to increase and competitiveness; often technical solutions are agreed within fora and consortia rather than in formal standard bodies. There are thus significant differences from the traditional sectors; no stable and well identified stake holder’s community exist and
furthermore; we must not forget standardisation should build on synergies between the various players rather than lead to fragmentation of the market and duplication of efforts.

- Commission and Member States recognised this: if ICT standardisation is about to support and increased competitiveness, the EU ICT standardisation policy may require an approach different from the traditional sector standardisation policies;
- That is why the strategic ICT standardisation policy study has been launched; it will start in January 2006 and the findings and recommendations will be submitted to an open consultation in spring 2007.

8)) How is Interoperability defined by EU policy

- Interoperability between services and applications is obviously a critical issue for the competitiveness of economy as a whole, and naturally of crucial importance in the further development of the Information Society; Interoperability, already a target for eEurope, has therefore become a key objective set by i2010
- The realisation of i2010 goals will very much depend on “platforms, services and applications being able to talk to one another and to build an economic activity on the information received” This is what we understand as “Interoperability”. It is complex, not limited to the infrastructure level but encompasses semantic interoperability, organisational interoperability and even regulatory interoperability.
- EU Standardisation, an open and inclusive platform accessible to all stakeholders, provides a major opportunity to contribute better interoperability between applications and services. Standardisation is, however, not sufficient. i2010 announces “the Commission will use all its instruments: research, open standards, stakeholder dialogue and even, if required, mandatory instruments to foster technologies that communicate”
• i2010 clearly considers standardisation and consensus building, involving all relevant stakeholders as a major contributor to reach an adequate level of interoperability.

• The Commission’s objective is to foster **global** interoperability; this requires globally agreed standards. In that context, the importance of global partnerships has to be underlined. The Global Standards Conference, hosted by ETSI end of August begin September, is an excellent example of such global initiatives aiming at Interoperability. GSC’s resolutions concerning interoperability and standards should carefully be considered.

9) **ETSI work on this issue so far**

• So far ETSI has done an excellent job; the High level Strategy Recommendations have been agreed; they aim at putting ETSI in the picture as an efficient and effective European but even so global organisation responsive to the ICT community as well as to the needs of public authorities expecting to use standards in legislation and policies.

• The initiative to carry out a High level strategy review has been launched by the ETSI 2004 Spring GA; the Recommendations have been agreed at the 2005 Spring GA; they address, amongst others, the global and European role of the organisation, the scope, organisational aspects, working methodology etc.

• I want, today, to underline in particular the Recommendation concerning ETSI Interoperability services such as Plug test and PTCC. Increasing interoperability requires more then just standards; interoperability testing will become a major tool to complement it. The Commission services will continue to support the initiative; industry recognised the value of it. We want to continue the excellent partnership between the Commission, ETSI and Industry.
• The Commission has expressed its support to the Recommendations and will continue to support ETSI in its efforts to implement them... However, the Commission has will continue to insist on a coherent EU standardisation system, which involves concertation with the CEN and CENELEC.

• The Commission will take the ETSI review into account, as an important input to the further analysis of the ICT standardisation policy which has recently been announced. This Workshop, the second on interoperability and standards, clearly demonstrate ETSI’s intention to provide the market with innovative and effective solutions that will support competitive markets; also here, the Commission fully supports and is looking forward to the conclusions of your discussions

10) The Commission’s actions in ICT standardisation role

From the Commission’s side following actions will be launched:

• The strategic ICT standardisation policy study; special emphasis of the interoperability objective has been given and open standards as well as the related IPR issues are subject for further analysis and Recommendations are expected. Through a Steering group, that will monitor the execution of the work, ETSI will be involved in the work. Also the open meeting early 2007 will permit to have a broad discussion and subsequent agreement on the Recommendations

• Once the headlines for the new ICT standardisation policies are identified, the Commission will further discuss with the standards organisations on how the standardisation system best could respond to the new situation; to determine how the new ICT standardisation policy shall be in the years to come.

• On the operational level, the financial support, in the ICT domain, that will be provided to the standardisation organisations in the years to come will be targeting the interoperability objectives set by i2010.
4 messages

- Standardisation plays a major role in the Lisbon strategy; the Commission is working on a consolidated legal basis that permits to face the challenges ahead.
- We need a new policy on ICT standardisation to respond better to market and societal needs.
- ETSI’s work is very important, we follow closely and will continue to support ETSI in its strategic revision activity; the Commission encourages ETSI to closely co-operation with the ESO’s to establish the European standardisation system that Europe needs.
- invite ETSI and all stakeholders to contribute to discussions once the study results are available.