



EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION

Ref. 1099685

Speech delivered by Mr. Tore Nyvold Thomassen at CEN's general assembly in Malta on 1 June 2010.

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving EFTA the opportunity to address this year's General Assembly.

I would also like to express my thanks to Maltese Standardisation for its hospitality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, I will present a brief stocktaking with regard to the year that has passed since the Assembly in Madrid, stress a few issues which are important for the future and finally take a look at how things began 50 years ago.

2009/2010

EFTA has enjoyed a new year of excellent co-operation with CEN. Our new Framework partnership agreement was signed in October 2009. The EFTA Annual Operating Grant for 2010 is not finalized yet, since the one between the European Commission and CEN has only been signed very recently. In 2009 there was a lot of activity with regard to Actions Grants; the EFTA financial commitment to standardisation increased by 32% compared to 2008. So far 2010 has been less busy with regard to action grants.

This year, we have seen the common CEN-CENELEC Management Centre (CCMC) and a new common director general coming into place. From the EFTA Secretariat's point of view, we have noted the simplification in our relations with fewer meetings. To conclude: The CCMC is so far a positive experience.

The three European Standardisation organisations (ESOs) have created a working group on **education about standardisation**. The EFTA Secretariat tries to participate as an active observer in this group, which addresses some important issues:

- How to increase the basic knowledge about standardisation in the boardroom of companies – including e.g. economists and lawyers?
- How to increase the basic knowledge about standardisation among government policy and law makers?

To reach out to a wider range of students is a huge challenge, and a long term challenge. I would like to use this opportunity to encourage the National Standards Bodies to invest time and resources in this new working group and to support their delegates in the group. The task of the group is “outside” the normal work of making standards, so again, the challenges are there and support is needed.

I will now move on to **standardisation and certification of services**. The Services Directive is in place. It is vague on standardising and certification.

I know that the ESOs are committed to creating **European** standards for services. But, I hear that national standards bodies are making **national** standards for services, and their certification department are making new certification schemes for services.

The challenge EFTA sees for the NSBs is to raise the standardisation of services to a European level. The same applies to certification schemes created at a national level.

If this does not happen, there is a risk of **fragmentation** at a national level of the Single market for services, I point again to the Services Directive.

Can the certification of services be raised by you to a European level? Why not make use of your own scheme, the **Key-mark**? It is already there, and it has a very solid foundation: European standards! If, and I underline if, there is a need for certification expressed by service providers, why not guide them towards the Key-mark, in parallel with the development of European standards for services? I am not aware of any better solutions at a European level.

Last, but not least, I would like to highlight **the need for making the European Standardisation System (ESS) an even better tool for achieving the goals set in environmental policies**. We need to increase the knowledge among environmental NGOs of the possibilities offered by the ESS. Maybe improvements have to be made to the ESS to attract more environmental stakeholders?

A lot has been done, and is being done, to improve the involvement of SME's and consumers in standardisation. However, we feel in EFTA that focus in the ESS on environmental issues needs to be further sharpened. This view is based on three observations:

- Standardisation has proven to be a useful tool in support of many policy areas;
- Europe 2020 focus on many environment/climate related policies and standardisation has the potential of being more widely used;
- There is often scepticism towards standardisation among environmental NGOs and policy/lawmakers in the environmental field.

ECOS and EFTA is preparing a small workshop at the end of June which intends to shed light on the diverging views of standardisation as a useful tool for environmental policies. What can we learn from past experiences? Can we identify any room for improvement to be made?

Then to 50 years ago!

When making historical research, identifying your sources is important. I would like to express my thanks to Johannes Thorsteinsson, my predecessor in EFTA, for giving me some hints about an important book, and to David Bell in BSI for lending me this book: “BSI. The story of standards”.

EFTA celebrates 50 years in 2010! The EFTA Convention entered into force on 5 May 1960.

What happened in Europe with regard to standardisation at the end of the 1950's/the beginning of the 1960's? This is a very consolidated and simplified version of it:

As a result of the creation of the European Communities with the Treaty of Rome signed in 1957, we saw the creation of EFTA in 1960. However, there was a growing concern about the possible development of two parallel European standardisation systems..

On the initiative of the British and German directors for standardisation, a meeting between western European standardisation bodies was organised in Zurich (EFTA!) in 1960. One important outcome of this meeting was the establishment of CEN in 1961.

To conclude:

If it hadn't been for EFTA, who knows whether we would have been gathered here today in Malta, at the CEN General Assembly?

I am not sure whether I should try to look 50 years into the future, so I will not.

Thanks for your attention!