



## European and international product safety standardization

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When in May 1985 the European Council adopted the "New Approach to Technical Harmonization and Standardization", the objective was to make life easier for all parties involved in business and trade while guaranteeing a high level of protection of public interests. Indeed, the New Approach has provided a strong incentive for the further development of the Single European Market, the improvement of its competitive potential and the promotion of free trade throughout the European Economic Area. A strong link has thus been established between EU legislation, standardization, testing and certification in Europe.

Now, more than 20 years have passed, and political and economic structures not only in Europe but worldwide have undergone considerable changes. The European Commission has meanwhile started the revision of the New Approach, which is likely to have major implications for standardization.

Moreover, in view of the fast progressing globalization, international standards have become increasingly important. For the European standardization system it will be a great challenge to ensure that the basic requirements established in the European Directives with regard to overall objectives such as protection of safety, health and environment will be adopted and maintained at international level. One way to implement European standards work successfully at international level are the Vienna and Dresden agreements which represent important and efficient components in the standardization process.

In the field of occupational safety and health, European standardization plays a vital role and has largely contributed to risk prevention. In particular, with regard to the machinery directive and in the field of personal protective equipment, a profound and wide-ranging set of European standards has been established.