Standards for Accessibility: Opportunities and Challenges for European SMEs

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About NORMAPME

- International non-profit organisation based in Brussels
- Created in 1996
- Supported by the EU Commission
- Team of 15 employees
- Represents over 12 million enterprises in the EU and EFTA member states
- Offers services to ALL European SMEs regardless of their membership
- Covers all SME relevant sectors (e.g. construction, ICT, environment, food, machinery, tourism)
NORMAPME mission

- NORMAPME is the only European organisation which is exclusively devoted to the interests of Small and Medium sized Enterprises in all sectors of the European standardisation system (ESS).
- NORMAPME experts are currently in 51 TCs at CEN, CENELEC, ETSI and ISO.
- Each expert is supported by a national SME association and backed by a pan-European mirror group.
Accessibility Standards in specific sectors: the effects on SMEs

The ICT sector

- Very few formal standards for accessibility, ICT being a fairly new area
- Many standards developed at European level by the ETSI TC Human Factors (HF)
- BUT also standards developed by fora/consortia like IETF, W3C etc
- Millions of SMEs adopt these standards
Accessibility Standards in specific sectors: the effects on SMEs

The LIFTS sector

- The lifts sector already offers a number of standards including accessibility requirements (e.g. EN 81-70:2003; EN 81-40:2008).

- SME manufacturers and installers of the sector welcome these standards as an opportunity to develop their businesses and provide improved products to their clients.
Accessibility Standards in specific sectors: the effects on SMEs

The CONSTRUCTION and FURNITURE sectors

- Sectors often regulated by national laws and standards.
- New standards/requirements for accessibility could entail:
  - Higher costs;
  - Additional requirements;
  - More complex obligations / lack of clarity (risk of contrast with some performance requirements).
- What is desirable for SMEs? FLEXIBILITY and TOLERANCE (a general guideline for architects and producers rather than product standards for accessibility).
- A good national example: DIN 18040 “Construction of accessible buildings - Design principles”.

[Images and logos]
Conclusions: SME recommendations to standardisers and policy makers

- Possible opportunities for SMEs: new market niches; internationalisation; transfer of knowledge on accessibility design etc.

- Possible risks for SMEs: TCs (Technical Committees) controlled by strong stakeholders; excessive costs; lack of market driven standards (most sectors already regulated by national laws)
Conclusions: SME recommendations to standardisers and policy makers

To policy makers:

- Need for balanced representation of stakeholders within TCs and WGs.
- Market relevance of new standardisation projects to be assessed priory.
- Need to avoid proliferation of standards.
Thank you for your attention!