

Towards a new approach to standards that support active and healthy ageing to engage with users of all age groups

A collective statement by participants of the STAIR-AHA platform

“Demographic ageing in Europe requires systematic incorporation of the needs of older persons and persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable members of society, in the development of standards, which are a suitable tool to help achieve an active and healthy society in Europe and to increase the accessibility of products and services for people.”

European Parliament Resolution of 4 July 2017¹

Demographics are changing. The proportion of people aged 65 and above, relative to those aged between 15 and 64 in the European Union (EU), was almost 30% in 2016. It will increase to more than 50% in 2070². Older people are an important and growing group of stakeholders. While some have support needs, many are leaders, carers, workers and entrepreneurs.

Standards, regulations, guidelines, specifications and interoperability profiles, can play an important role in making sure that products and services respond to the needs and choices of older people. They can contribute to addressing current and future societal challenges. **The role and input of societal stakeholders in the development of standards needs to be strengthened, through the reinforced support of organisations representing citizens**³.

Standards organisations have a crucial role in reaching this objective. The three European Standards Organisations (ESOs), i.e. CEN, CENELEC and ETSI, are facilitating the appropriate participation of all relevant stakeholders. This is reinforced by the support that the European Union is providing in offering resources for the participation of consumers’ representatives (ANEC), trade unions (ETUC), environmental citizens’ organisations (ECOs) as well as small- and medium-sized businesses (SBS).

¹ European Parliament resolution of 4 July 2017 on European standards for the 21st century (2016/2274(INI)).

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2017-0278+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

² The 2018 Ageing Report: Economic and Budgetary Projections for the EU Member States (2016-2070).

https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/economy-finance/policy-implications-ageing-examined-new-report-2018-may-25_e

³ Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32012R1025>



The PROGRESSIVE project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement no. 727808

Yet ensuring a balance among all age groups in terms of their representation in standardisation processes is challenging. The European standardisation frameworks are organised by and for the stakeholders concerned. This involvement is based either on direct participation (ETSI) or on national representation (CEN and CENELEC) through national standardisation bodies. **There are noteworthy initiatives at the national level⁴ to encourage and facilitate the participation of civil society stakeholders. However, the representativeness of citizens' and consumers' groups – including in terms of age diversity – remains problematic.**

AGE Platform Europe, the main European network for non-profit organisations of and for people aged 50+, is also involved in some standardisation activities coordinated by ESOs. In addition, AGE works in close collaboration with ANEC, the European consumer voice in standardisation, and EDF, the European Disability Forum, on standardisation issues.

Lack of representation can have unfortunate impacts. The limited level of inclusion⁵ of older people in the standardisation process is a missed opportunity. It inhibits efforts to move away from ageist misconceptions of older people's needs and preferences. It also has some obvious negative consequences for standards themselves. These include their overall risk of lack of legitimacy and relevance; of failure to meet the needs of all ages of end-users; and of increase in the social exclusion of older people. Yet, there are ways to overcome these potential negative impacts.

The European Union-funded project, PROGRESSIVE⁶, has fostered the creation of the STAIR-AHA platform. As a result of its work, the STAIR-AHA platform has developed a statement that outlines recommendations for the need for change in developing standards for active and healthy ageing.

This statement calls on standardisers, policy-makers and socio-economic actors involved in standardisation to:

- **Ensure the compliance of the standards developed with a set of ethical principles** which echoes the founding European values of respect and dignity in the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights⁷;
- **Raise awareness of the benefits of the inclusion of older people** – as experts regarding their own needs and preferences – in standards development;

⁴ AFNOR (France) has a panel of seniors and experts to validate consumer products; the DIN Consumer Council (Germany) structures the participation of consumer experts in the standardisation of products and services; SIS (Sweden) and SN (Norway) have experiences with panel members.

⁵ STAIR-AHA has identified the following causes for the low participation of older people in standardisation: the standardisation process itself; a lack of awareness on the part of both the standardisation organisations and older adults; difficulties with older people getting engaged in meetings/the process; funding and resources; accessibility; other barriers e.g., language and technologies; a generation gap(s); and people having priorities other than standards.

⁶ <https://progressivestandards.org>

⁷ The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union is available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf



The PROGRESSIVE project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under Grant Agreement no. 727808

- **Improve the inclusion of a wider range of stakeholders** in the standardisation process and **engage older people’s representatives** in order to ensure a better fit of standards with the needs and preferences of older people;
- **Make the standardisation process accessible in accordance with design-for-all principles** so as to facilitate the participation of civil society representatives (examples of work could encompass user interfaces and built environments that are friendly, accessible and usable).

In light of the above, this statement recommends that:

1. International, European and national **standardisation bodies** wishing to be relevant for ageing societies in their approaches to standardisation **should base their work on the following non-exhaustive list of key ethical tenets:**
 - Accessibility and Usability
 - Affordability
 - Autonomy and Empowerment
 - Beneficence and Non-Maleficence
 - Care, Protection and Support
 - Equality, Equity, Justice
 - Inclusion, Non-Discrimination, Social Impact
 - Interoperability
 - Privacy, Safety, Security
2. International, European and national **standardisation processes should be revised** to ensure that they **enable the participation of older people’s representatives**, as a relevant group of stakeholders, to initiatives that concern them most.
3. International, European and national **standards organisations should be encouraged to reach out to underrepresented groups of citizens** and solicit their opinions on relevant questions. **Creative user co-production methodologies should be implemented**, as a tool to engage all end-users in the standardisation process. Specifically, STAIR-AHA recommends to promote the use of the **“Guidelines for User Co-production in Standards”** developed by the PROGRESSIVE project.⁸
4. The existence of **forums of discussion** for the dissemination, awareness and discussion of issues related to active and healthy ageing standardisation, engaging experts from a broad spectrum of stakeholders’ groups such as the CEN-CENELEC STAIR-AHA platform, **should be promoted**.

⁸ The “Guidelines for user co-production in standards” developed by the PROGRESSIVE project are available at https://progressivestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/PROGRESSIVE-guide-on-user-co-production_20180606.pdf



5. The **awareness of end-users** of the benefit of standards and the relevant role they have in the definition of quality products and services, as well as how they can contribute to standards development, **should be increased**. The awareness of the **mutual benefits** of the inclusion of older people's needs in standards, products and services for both older people and standards organisations **should be raised**.
6. The promotion of the **participation of older people's representatives in standardisation should be encouraged** at the **national level** of standardisation bodies, because - at that level - it enables debate that is closer to the language of the stakeholders.
7. **The design and use of technology** that supports services for older people **should be made transparent** to end-users, since the accessibility and usability of environments – both built and digital – are key issues in ensuring the participation of a wide range of citizens.
8. **Standardisers, policy-makers and socio-economic actors involved in standardisation may find** various reports and deliverables produced by the **PROGRESSIVE** project to be **useful** in supporting the future work to be done on including older people in the process of standardisation design and implementation. These include guidelines on standards covering age-friendliness; smart homes for older adults; and interoperability frameworks.⁹

This statement is grounded in the findings, discussions and conclusions of the 31st October 2018 first STAIR-AHA platform meeting, “A new approach to AHA standards engaging end-users”¹⁰, and the 19th October 2017 workshop “Making ICT Standards Fit for Active and Healthy Ageing in Europe”¹¹. Both meetings were organised by the PROGRESSIVE project¹². In addition, the online platform produced by the PROGRESSIVE project, and all the associated PROGRESSIVE reports may provide useful support materials.¹³

⁹ See: <https://progressivestandards.org/resources/project-reports>

¹⁰ The report of the meeting is available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TArcqjv76NjH0htSMg7y5-2vNBktk5PA/view?usp=sharing>

¹¹ The report of the meeting is available at https://progressivestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/PROGRESSIVE_Forum_REPORT-0_1.pdf, <https://progressivestandards.org/resources/project-reports>

¹² More information about the STAIR-AHA can be found online: <https://progressivestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/PROGRESSIVE-Factsheet-STAIR-AHA.pdf>

¹³ For the PROGRESSIVE online platform, see: <https://progressivestandards.org>

