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Standardisation of Support Services for Innovation Management

“FIEC says yes to innovation but no to increasing costs and burdens on enterprise”

FIEC welcomes Community initiatives to foster innovation for small and medium sized enterprises but insists that such policy should not prescribe how innovation should be defined and developed at company level but rather should seek to foster the right climate for business to thrive. **Policy makers should not seek to standardise the innovation process thereby risking the competitiveness and versatility of Europe’s enterprises. FIEC also rejects any attempt to link standardisation in this area to mandatory certification or funding.**

Introduction

In November 2008 and against the recommendations of many industry stakeholders, the European Committee for Standardisation’s (CEN) Technical Board voted to create a Technical Committee (TC) on Innovation Management (TC 396). The European Commission has, in the meantime, begun the process of drafting a mandate that would require CEN to draft standards on business support services in the field of innovation management.

FIEC opposes the creation of a Commission mandate for the following reasons:

1. Any resulting standard may be used to oblige companies and especially SMEs to submit to costly evaluations on their capacity for innovation management in order to receive equity or public funds. This is clearly unacceptable. No company should run the risk of being deprived of funding due to an obligation to undergo mandatory evaluation of their innovation capacity.
2. The potentially mandatory character of the standard in certain instances (e.g. access to financing) runs a real risk that such an instrument would serve merely to create a market for certification rather than foster true innovation in a company.
3. The standard may also have the effect of providing a template for innovation management itself. Companies, rather than focusing on increasing their own capacity to innovate, may find themselves preoccupied with complying with a codified assessment procedure in order to obtain certification: the very opposite of the spirit of innovation.
4. Problems facing business vary across countries. It is therefore unwise to seek to establish a one size fits all standard.

The right use of CEN and the standardisation process

In FIEC’s view, rather than carry out mandated standardisation work that does not respond to any demand from the market, CEN should seek to draw up a non-binding Technical Report (TR) or Workshop Agreement (CWA) that will provide SMEs with examples of best practice and guidance for self-evaluation of an enterprise.

FIEC is the European Construction Industry Federation, representing via its 33 national Member Federations in 28 countries (26 EU & EFTA, Croatia and Turkey) construction enterprises of all sizes, i.e. small and medium-sized enterprises as well as “global players”, carrying out all forms of building and civil engineering activities.

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