

Citizens' summary

EU standardisation proposal

- Standards lay down **technical or quality criteria** for products, services and production processes. Examples include the A4 standard paper size or the new standard for a [universal mobile-phone charger](#) to fit all models.
- **European standards are voluntary.** Nobody is obliged to use or apply them.

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

- Adopting a standard requires consensus, which takes time. In some cases, the process takes much too long – when the interested parties cannot reach an agreement.
- Some IT standards are adopted by organisations outside the EU. These standards are nevertheless used on most computers in Europe, or on the internet.
- Increasingly, standards are being adopted for services, management systems, environmental and social issues – not just for technical products as in the past

WHAT EXACTLY WILL CHANGE?

- European standards will be available more rapidly.
- Standards will be drafted with the help of organisations representing those most affected, or most concerned – consumers, small businesses, environmental and social organisations.
- If there is a demand from businesses, there will be more European standards for services.
- Public authorities will have a broader choice of hardware and software.

WHO WILL BENEFIT AND HOW?

- **Public authorities** will be able to define more precisely how their hardware and software can be connected to other computers and networks;
- Standards will be available sooner for **businesses**. They can use these standards to make their products more compatible with other products so that **consumers** will have a broader choice at a lower price.

WHY DOES ACTION HAVE TO BE TAKEN BY THE EU?

- European standards are crucial for the businesses trading on the EU market and for consumers – so that products bought in one EU country can be used in others too.

WHEN IS THE PROPOSAL LIKELY TO COME INTO EFFECT?

- Probably in 2013.