

Date:	20-12-2013	Document:	F13-080 EN
Title:	Report from the CEN Symposium in Brussels 10 December 2013 “ Improving quality and safety of healthcare: The role of European service standards” (European standardization in relation to healthcare services)		
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Short report of the activities at the CEN Symposium organized in Brussels on Tuesday December 10th 2013.

There was a large representation of European Medical Associations as CPME was strongly represented, the FEMS was represented by a Portuguese colleague , Paulo Cristiano Do Mascimento Simoes, and myself, the AEMH, German Medical Association and Berlin Medical Association as well as German Societies and the Finnish Medical Association.

First, the Director General of CEN, Mrs. Elena Santiago, gave an introductory presentation about what is CEN, and what were the aims and objectives of CEN.

After this general introduction, the Director of Standards of CEN, Mr. Jean-Paul Vetsuypens, gave an overview on the practical working of CEN and how standards were written.

The request comes from CEN membership or outside people but the fact that a request is taken has to be approved by the CEN Board.

He insisted a lot of the fact that it is a private company and that they are NOT a part of the Commission.

Sometimes they work for the EU Commission on some projects.

Also he insisted that Standards are NOT mandatory.

Frank Montgomery from CPME and the German Medical Association highlighted here the lack of transparency of how the experts are nominated and how the choice was made for setting up a standard.

There was a quite strong debate with very opposite viewpoints from CEN and the physicians.

Then Stefan Nonneman, the Head of Unit at the Commission DG Enterprise gave the legal framework of CEN.

Followed by Katja Neubauer from DG SANCO who gave the link with some Directives where Healthcare is involved such as for instance Dir 2005/36 EC where there is mentioning of Standards and Guidelines.

Here I intervened by asking why there are two words used if they mean the same as for me Guidelines are an objective to try to get while a Standard has to be obtained.

There was again a strong debate on the process and there was no understanding from both parties about the other.

They also introduced the upcoming CEN standards and here also problems can be expected...

One of the Standards already approved is about the practice of Chiropraxis.

Some to come are about the Recognition of Homeopathy and Osteopathy...

The problem was that the chairman of the session, Jean-Paul Vetsuypens did not allowed a real open discussion.

During the coffee break there was some possibility to discuss.

The second part of the morning session was some practical experiences with standards.

First a presentation from the Program Manager for Sustainability and Services of CEN, Mrs. Maitane Otabarnia who highlighted the existing standards and those who are in the pipeline.

Followed by the introduction of the standard EN 16224 "Healthcare provision by chiropractors" by Mr. Philippe Druart, the Chariman of CEN TC 394 and previously the Chairman of the European Association of Chiropraxis.

Mrs. Michela Vuerich, the Programme Manager of ANEC, the consumer association in Standard setting gave the patients view on the Aesthetic Surgery standards.

Obviously, the stress is done on Patient Safety but how the standards are written or approved remains still a mistery.

The last speaker of the morning was Gareth Davies about care service for cleft lip and palate : the need for standardization.

The main problem is that many times, the argument was that healthcare provision is very different in for instance Germany and Bulgaria but how could Standards solve the problem while you will need more resources in Bulgaria to provide equally high level services there.

Also during lunch, there was some opportunity to discuss and on my table, there was the Portuguese colleague, someone from the Belgian Health Ministry and Pascal Garel from HOPE, the hospital Association in Europe.

The person from the Belgian Ministry said that he did also not know how the standards are set up and approved and wondered about the lack of transparency.

Pascal Garel on his side said that he was about 15 years in European Affairs and he NEVER heard about this ANEC representing the customers in standard setting...

In the afternoon there were some national examples of implementation of standards in health care services.

First about Galicia where Mrs. Dolores Martin gave the view of the Gallician Health care system.

Then came an example of how standards were used in the development of care for the elderly in Sweden by Mrs. Marie Brandvold.

Mr. Graham Halsey presented a project, PAS 150 for the delivery of rehabilitation services.

The meeting ended with a panel discussion where the topic as "Healthcare services, what role for European Standardization" ?

Speakers were Frank Ulrich Montgomery, well known to us.

Paul De Raeye, the President of the European Federation of Nurses (EFN).

Mrs. Anne Sophie Parent, from the platform for elderly people (AGE).

Mr. Sven Trautner from Falck Denmark.

Here also there was not really an understanding between the Health Care professionals and the other participants.

Clearly, there is a big need to better communicate and discuss with CEN provided of course that CEN provides the needed transparency about who is doing what and for what purpose.

The concluding remarks were given by Jean-Paul Vetsuypens and looked for me to have been prepared before the meeting by the CEN Staff with the exception of some interventions.

In conclusion, it was very important that so many representatives of Medical Associations attended this event in order to show to CEN that we have big concerns about how standards are set up and how the choice is made to propose a standard.

A lot of work will still be needed in order to make CEN much more transparent and working according clear rules itself, putting may-be standards on themselves first.

B. Maillet, representing Enrico Reginato, FEMS President at the event.