



Europäische Metall-Union  
European Metal Union  
Union Européenne du Métal

### Should standards be delivered free of charge?

On 5 March 2024, the European Court of Justice issued a controversial ruling. In this court case C-558/21 P, the Court followed the opinion of the Advocate General, which proposed that harmonized standards be available free of charge, assimilating them to any legislative act.

The accessibility of mandatory and harmonised standards provides SMEs with direct and public access to documents previously only available for purchase. However, on the longer run, this decision may lead to major hurdles. It is important to prevent a scenario where any loss of revenue from the sale of harmonised standards is offset by increased prices of other standards and/or higher participation fees in the national committees contributing to their development. Our Danish EMU Member organization, Tekniq, collected legal advice on the text. The conclusion from the lawyers occur major changes in the current system, both for European and International Standards. There would be no copyright to harmonized standards, as they form part of EU legislation. Conversely, ISO standards will continue to be protected, but that protection is limited by the principle of free access. Member states will be obligated to ensure that there is free access to legislation, as long as Member States are competent to implement EU law.

### Net Zero Industry Act



The deployment of clean energy technologies required to support the achievement of Europe's 2030 and 2050 climate targets is considerable. Europe already largely imports these technologies. Like many third countries is increasing efforts to expand clean energy manufacturing capacity to reduce strategic dependencies for key products. On 16 March 2023, the Commission put forward a proposal for a 'net-zero industry act'. The general objective of the proposed regulation would be to establish a framework of measures for innovating and expanding the manufacturing capacity of net-zero technologies in the EU.

The proposed regulation would set up enabling conditions for the manufacturing of 10 net-zero technologies. Eight 'strategic' net-zero technologies would gain additional benefits (even shorter administrative processes, facilitated access to markets, and administrative support to access finance). The proposed regulation would aim to ensure that, by 2030, the manufacturing capacity in the EU for these strategic net-zero technologies reaches an overall benchmark of at least 40 % of the EU's annual deployment needs. It would also set an EU-level target for annual CO<sub>2</sub> injection capacity by 2030 (50 million tons).

Many third countries are stepping up efforts to expand their clean energy manufacturing capacity, to advance net zero transitions, strengthen energy security and compete in the new global energy economy. In the **United States**, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), signed into law in August 2022, is the subject of fierce debate in the EU, and **India** is boosting supply chain investments in domestic manufacturing of steel (US\$800 million) over the 2022-2027 period. The European Parliament adopted its final text in April 2024. Overall, the regulation was considerably improved in terms of inclusiveness (SMEs in supply chains) and slightly improved regarding the SME support measures.

### The economics of Generative AI

The National Bureau of Economic Research in the US analyzed the effects of generative AI on worker productivity in the context of technical customer support. They found significant improvements in worker productivity as measured by the number of customer issues workers were able to resolve per hour. On average, worker productivity increased by 14 percent. In addition to this, workers who had previously been using the AI system now had to answer questions without access to it, and nonetheless they continued to outperform those who had never used the system. This suggests that the system helped them learn, and retain, answers. In contrast with earlier waves of information technology that largely benefited higher-skill workers, generative AI technologies could particularly benefit workers at the lower or middle levels of the skills distribution.



Innovations in AI systems may further improve the functioning of current AI tools. In a recent article, the Economist ("AI's next top model", April 20<sup>th</sup> 2024) magazine considers advanced planning via search as the focus of much current effort. Meta, for example, is trying to program the ability to reason and make predictions directly into an AI system. A framework called "Joint Embedding Predictive Architecture" (JEPA) is trained to predict larger chunks of text or images in a single step than current generative-AI models. Further researches are also on their way on how to make AI researches through prompts less computationally intensive and incremental (for example through sequential reading of contents, updating the worldview as it progresses). This is not only more efficient, but also more closely approximates the ways human comprehension works.

The ultimate economic effects of generative AI will depend not only upon how much it boosts productivity and changes work in specific cases, but also on how much of the economy it is likely to affect. As AI continues to grow in power, so too does the need for economic research to better understand how we can harness its benefits while mitigating its risks.

See the whole study at: <https://www.nber.org/reporter/2024number1/economics-generative-ai>

#### EMU

Boulevard Anspach 111 Bte 13  
B-1000 Brussels  
Tel: + 32 (0)2 274 22 07  
Fax: +32 (0)2 400 71 26

Email: [office@emu-sme.eu](mailto:office@emu-sme.eu)  
Website: [www.emu-sme.eu](http://www.emu-sme.eu)

