



**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH MEP CHRISTIAN DOLESCHAL:
“The Construction Products Regulation must be made
fit for future!”**



MEP Christian Doleschal (PPE), © Martin Lahous

“Harmonised European standards are the backbone of the internal market: they promote competition and catalyse innovation. But there has been a considerable backlog of standards for construction products for years. We need long-term and viable solutions to clear this standardisation backlog. The Construction Products Regulation must be made fit for the future!”
MEP Christian Doleschal - Rapporteur on the implementation report on the review of the Construction Products Regulation (CPR).

The vote on the implementation report on the review of the Construction Products Regulation (CPR) took place in the European Parliament on the 10th of March. With an almost unanimous result, 686 in favour, 4 against and 5 abstentions, this was a clear call from the European Parliament to the European Commission for an improvement of the standardisation procedures in favour of safer and more environmental products. As rapporteur, MEP Christian Doleschal has accepted to share his views with Fire Safe Europe.



The result of the vote has been a clear endorsement of your report by the European Parliament, yet can you tell us what challenges did you face with this implementation report on the review of the CPR? What were your objectives?

The biggest challenge in the negotiations of my own-initiative report was certainly the question of how we can get the standardisation system, which has been deadlocked for years, up and running again. The standards backlog affects all product sectors. However, due to the mandatory nature of harmonised product standards under the Construction Products Regulation, manufacturers of construction products are more affected than others. This has serious consequences for companies and manufacturers because, at the same time, technology and the need for regulation are evolving. Especially in view of the Covid-19 pandemic, which unfortunately has not stopped at the construction sector, we need to focus not only on short-term but also on long-term solutions to review the Construction Products Regulation. Many companies are struggling with supply bottlenecks for building materials and increasing prices for construction products.

On another line, we need to look into how we can involve stakeholders and practitioners in the development of the standards in the best possible way and get the Construction Products Regulation fit for the future. Digitalisation and sustainability are certainly the biggest topics in the future.

The European Commission has already presented several options for revision and will have to formulate a proposal before the end of the year. How do you think the existing standardisation and assessment processes in European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) and European Organisation for technical assessment (EOTA) might be improved?

The existing, well-established standardisation processes should continue to be defined by the stakeholders together with the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN) and the European Organisation for technical assessment (EOTA). A shift away would hurt the European market and create strong divisions. The European Standards Organisation CEN has for nearly 60 years provided the structure for the development and publication of technical standards. Our European standardisation has allowed our markets to evolve and grow and to take a leading position and role model in international standardisation. In our report, we encourage the Commission to develop comprehensive and horizontal guidelines for standardisation bodies outlining the structure and requirements of a requested standard. We consider it important that the Commission defines the scope of the standards more precisely so that manufacturers can have clear guidance when declaring that their products fall within the scope.

A revision of the CPR is necessary, but crucial in the short-term is the need for a solution for the publication of new and revised standards to meet the expectations and requirements of the market. The time calls for new measures and innovative approaches. The Commission estimates that the revision of the CPR and the resolution of the standards backlog (CPR acquis) could take between 5 and 10 years. The “EOTA-route” could therefore serve as a



provisory solution in order to ensure legal clarity for a transitional period as regards any review of the CPR in order to avoid a legal vacuum and secure the smooth transition from existing to new provisions.

Lot of stakeholders called to ensuring the legal clarity of CPR. A few claimed that we were still under Construction Products Directive (CPD). What does it miss, according to you? And more particularly in terms of CE marking and market surveillance?

The lack of legal clarity and uncertainty are indeed the biggest challenges in the revision of the CPR. I believe that further solutions are needed to provide end-users and builders with precise and clear information on the nature of the CE-marking with regard to the safety of construction products and their compliance with national building safety and construction works requirements. Digitalisation could be the unifying element here. The construction sector is generally one of the least digitalised sectors - despite its great potential.

And finally, the reviewed CPR should focus more on market surveillance of construction products in Europe. Online marketing has not stopped at construction products: we should make sure that these products, as well as imports from third countries, meet our high safety standards in Europe.

Apart from the harmonised area – free movement of CE-marked construction products – the CPR deals with so-called horizontal issues, like fire safety testing and classification of all product on the EU market. The Commission started to expand this area by investigating facades and smoke toxicity. Would you agree that the new CPR should clarify the role of national and local building regulations in relation to these horizontal issues?

The division of competencies between the European Union and its Member States is regulated in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union: The Member States freely define the level of construction safety on the basis of their responsibility towards their citizens. The EU regulates the framework conditions of the internal market. In the construction sector, construction products represent the "interface" between the internal market and construction safety. The Member States set requirements for the quality of construction products depending on their use. For reasons of legal clarity, it should be specified, among other things, what the "use of construction products" in the construction sector means in concrete terms. The subject matter and limits of harmonisation should be clearly defined in the reviewed CPR!

How to find the right balance in terms of representation and roles of the different stakeholders?

The involvement of stakeholders in the consultation and evaluation process of the CPR is crucial in order to ensure a level playing field between economic operators. To that end, we need to ensure the active involvement of the industry and relevant stakeholders as well as Member States from A to Z. In our report, we are therefore calling on the Commission to



continue to closely consult with relevant stakeholders in the preparatory phase in line with the Standardisation Regulation in order to involve all parties to find workable solutions.

As a Member of the European Parliament, what would be your fire safety priorities for this year when it comes to the EU Green Deal's policies?

I believe we should take a holistic approach to the EU Green Deal's Initiatives such as the Renovation Wave or the CPR review. Fire safety should be, of course, one of the priorities when shaping the Renovation Wave. Fire is an extreme loading condition that must be considered in the design of buildings and their renovation. We need to include the consequences of our building and renovation choices in the planning and renovation process. Our goal should not only be to build a more sustainable but also a safer world.

More specifically, the CPR is a crucial piece of legislation for fire safety. Do you see any positive development for fire safety aspects, such as, for example, a testing and classification method for smoke toxicity of burning construction products or inclusion of fire safety in the Declarations of Performance (DoPs) and other datasheets, so that they address fire resistance and systems?

We saw it in the latest Commission's evaluations and consultations: the accessibility and quality of the information provided on construction products (e.g. in the declaration of performance, DoP) is not always sufficient, e.g. fire safety. These safety issues are often linked to deficiencies in harmonised standards, in particular where harmonised standards do not cover all the relevant safety aspects. This concerns obviously basic work requirement 3 on hygiene, health and the environment, but also BWR 2 on safety in case of fire. Setting performance and other requirements to ensure public safety, including the product's inherent safety, remains an unresolved issue that needs to be considered in the CPR review.