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Summary Academy Session A: “China Standards 2035 and its impact on European companies”

Globally harmonised standards as a long-term goal

Technical standards apply to a wide range of industries, products, parts and processes. “Standardisation is the key enabler for international business and the base for technology innovations across different countries,” said Rada Rodriguez, Vice President of German Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers’ Association (ZVEI) and CEO and General Manager of Signify GmbH in Hamburg. But standardisation is increasingly turning into a translation of political requirements, she added.

Of late, innovative Chinese companies from different industries have participated in larger number in technical standards meetings and exerted greater influence on the process. China has created the national “China Standards 2035” strategy to play a decisive role in affecting and shaping standards in industries defined in “Made in China 2025”. The key goals are to promote the economic and social development, to strengthen international exchange and cooperation and to guarantee a high quality of life, said Dr Betty Xu, Project Director of the Beijing based Seconded European Standardization Expert in China (SESEC) project, which is co-financed by the EU Commission, the European Committee for Standardization (EC) and other institutions.

The emerging of a third standardisation system in addition to the European and the US system will have consequences for European companies. Companies must play an active role in the strategic process of setting the standards, demanded Xiang Jie, President of Brose China and Board Member of the German Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai. Early participation will help the European companies not only to be informed about, but also to comply with the standards, Xu added. “Speed is increasing dramatically in standardisation and we need to cope with that,” Rodriguez said.

All panellists agreed that global standards would be a huge advantage, especially for export driven companies. That doesn’t necessarily mean that China has to adopt European or US standards. At Brose, some of the Chinese standards are already higher than the European ones, Xiang said. In China, there are initiatives to promote Chinese standards to go global, Xu added. “China’s target is to increase the global adoption rate of standardisation to 85 percent by 2035,” she said. That seems to be a very ambitious goal, a long way to go from the present state of just one third of standards being harmonised, said moderator Luisa Kinzius, Director of Sinolytics GmbH in Berlin.