

Streamlining AI Compliance: The Commission's Role in Standardization Requests

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7. Codes of Practice: Standards for compliance.			
<p>7.1 Harmonised Standards</p> <p><i>Presumption of conformity with harmonized standards.</i></p>	<p>7.2 Standardisation Requests</p> <p><i>Commission's role in issuing standardization requests.</i></p>	<p>7.3 Clear and Consistent Standards</p> <p><i>Ensuring clarity and consistency in standards.</i></p>	<p>7.4 Resource Performance and Energy Efficiency</p> <p><i>Focus on AI systems' resource performance.</i></p>

Introduction

In the rapidly evolving landscape of Artificial Intelligence (“AI”), the European Union’s (“EU”) AI Act (the “EU AI Act”) emerges as a cornerstone, setting forth a regulatory framework designed to ensure the safe and ethical deployment of AI technologies. Central to this framework is the concept of standardization, a process that harmonizes technical standards to foster compliance, innovation, and trust in AI systems. The European Commission plays a pivotal role in this ecosystem, tasked with issuing standardization requests to European standardization organizations.

These requests are instrumental in developing harmonized standards that AI technologies must meet to be presumed in conformity with the AI Act's stringent requirements.

Standardization under the AI Act is not just about technical conformity; it's a strategic approach to align AI technologies with the Union's values, fundamental rights, and safety standards. By issuing standardization requests, the Commission ensures that AI systems placed on the market or put into service within the EU adhere to high levels of quality and safety. This process involves consultation with the European AI Board and relevant stakeholders, ensuring a comprehensive and inclusive approach to AI governance.

Through these efforts, the Commission facilitates a smoother path for providers to demonstrate compliance, thereby streamlining the integration of AI technologies into the single market. This structured approach to standardization underscores the EU's commitment to fostering an environment where AI can thrive responsibly and ethically.

The EU AI Act and the Importance of Standardization

The EU AI Act aims to create a comprehensive regulatory framework for artificial intelligence technologies within the European Union. Its primary objectives are to ensure the safety and fundamental rights of users, foster trust in AI systems, and promote innovation across the AI landscape. To achieve these goals, the Act categorizes AI systems based on their risk levels and stipulates varying degrees of regulatory scrutiny and compliance requirements accordingly.

A critical aspect of the EU AI Act is the emphasis on standardization. Standardization is vital as it provides a common set of technical specifications and best practices that AI developers and deployers can adhere to, ensuring uniformity, reliability, and safety across AI applications. The Act heavily relies on harmonized standards to offer precise technical solutions for meeting compliance requirements. These standards are developed by recognized standardization organizations and are designed to cover various aspects of AI, including data management, transparency, and human oversight.

By leveraging harmonized standards, the EU AI Act not only simplifies the compliance process for businesses but also fosters a competitive and innovative AI ecosystem. Standardization ensures that AI technologies are developed and deployed in a manner that aligns with the regulatory expectations, thus enhancing user trust and facilitating market access for AI solutions within and beyond the EU.

Understanding Standardization Requests

Standardization requests, as outlined in the EU AI Act, are formal mandates issued by the European Commission to recognized European standardization organizations. These requests aim to develop harmonized standards that address the technical and procedural requirements set forth by the Act for high-risk AI systems and general-purpose AI models.

The process begins with the European Commission identifying specific areas where standardization is needed to ensure compliance with the Act. The Commission then issues a standardization request to organizations such as the European Committee for Standardization ("CEN"), the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization ("CENELEC"), and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute ("ETSI"). These organizations collaborate with industry experts, stakeholders, and regulatory bodies to develop detailed technical standards that cover various aspects of AI systems, including safety, transparency, accuracy, and robustness.

Once the standards are drafted, they undergo a rigorous review and approval process, ensuring they meet the high-quality benchmarks required by the Act. These harmonized standards provide a clear and consistent framework for AI developers and users, simplifying the compliance process and ensuring that AI technologies operate safely and effectively.

The Commission's Role in Standardization

The European Commission plays a pivotal role in the standardization process under the EU AI Act. It is responsible for identifying the need for new standards and issuing formal standardization requests to European standardization organizations. This process involves consultation with the advisory forum and the AI Board to ensure that the identified needs are comprehensive and address all relevant aspects of AI systems.

The Commission begins by analysing the current state of AI technologies and their associated risks. It collaborates with industry experts, stakeholders, and regulatory bodies to pinpoint areas where standardization is essential. This collaboration ensures that the standards reflect the latest technological advancements and industry practices, promoting innovation and competitiveness in the AI sector.

Once the need for standardization is identified, the Commission issues requests to recognized organizations like CEN, CENELEC, and ETSI. These requests outline the specific requirements that the standards must meet, ensuring they are aligned with the objectives of the EU AI Act. The development of these standards involves extensive consultation and review processes to guarantee they are robust, practical, and applicable to the current and future AI landscape. The Commission's role in this process is crucial for creating a harmonized regulatory environment that supports safe, effective, and innovative AI technologies. By ensuring that standards are state-of-the-art and industry-relevant, the Commission helps maintain the EU's competitive edge in the global AI market.

Challenges and Opportunities in Standardization Requests

The Commission faces several challenges in issuing standardization requests under the EU AI Act. One major challenge is ensuring timely responses from standardization organizations like CEN, CENELEC, and ETSI. These organizations must rapidly develop standards that keep pace with the fast-evolving field of AI. Aligning these standards with cutting-edge technological advancements while addressing safety and ethical concerns adds another layer of complexity.

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities. Standardization requests enable the harmonization of AI regulations across the EU, creating a cohesive regulatory environment. This harmonization simplifies compliance for businesses operating in multiple EU countries, reducing administrative burdens and fostering a single market for AI technologies.

Moreover, standardized regulations promote innovation by providing clear guidelines for AI development and deployment. They enhance trust in AI systems by ensuring they meet consistent safety and performance criteria. This trust is crucial for the widespread adoption of AI technologies, driving growth and competitiveness in the EU AI sector.

Best Practices for Navigating Standardization Requests

To navigate standardization requests effectively, AI providers should adopt several best practices. First, staying informed about new standardization requests is crucial. Providers can do this by subscribing to updates from the European Commission and relevant standardization organizations like CEN, CENELEC, and ETSI. Regularly checking their websites and participating in industry conferences can also keep providers updated on the latest developments.

Engaging directly with the standardization process is another vital strategy. AI providers should consider participating in the advisory forum or joining working groups within standardization organizations. This involvement allows them to contribute to the development of standards, ensuring that their interests and practical insights are considered. Active participation also helps providers anticipate and prepare for upcoming regulatory changes.

Collaboration with industry peers and stakeholders can further enhance alignment with standardization requests. By forming or joining industry consortia, providers can share knowledge, resources, and strategies for compliance. Additionally, investing in internal compliance teams or consulting with experts on AI regulations can ensure thorough understanding and adherence to standards.

By staying informed, actively participating in the standardization process, and collaborating with others, AI providers can effectively navigate the Commission's standardization requests, ensuring compliance and fostering innovation in the evolving AI landscape.

Conclusion

The European Commission plays a critical role in issuing standardization requests under the EU AI Act. These requests guide the development of harmonized standards essential for regulating AI technologies. By collaborating with standardization organizations like CEN, CENELEC, and ETSI, the Commission ensures that the standards reflect the latest technological advancements and industry needs.

Standardization requests simplify compliance processes for AI providers. They offer clear, consistent guidelines that help businesses understand and meet regulatory requirements. This reduces administrative burdens and fosters a more predictable regulatory environment. Additionally, harmonized standards enhance the safety, transparency, and reliability of AI systems, boosting user trust and promoting wider adoption of AI technologies.

Furthermore, the Commission's efforts in standardization support innovation and competitiveness in the EU's AI sector. By setting high-quality benchmarks, these standards encourage the development of cutting-edge AI solutions that can compete globally. They also facilitate the creation of a single market for AI technologies within the EU, allowing businesses to scale more easily across member states.

In conclusion, the Commission's issuance of standardization requests is vital for creating a safe, innovative, and competitive AI ecosystem in the EU. These requests streamline compliance, promote technological advancement, and support the growth of a unified AI market.

Glossary

Act or EU AI Act: European Union Artificial Intelligence Act

AI: Artificial Intelligence

Board: European Union Artificial Intelligence Board

EU: European Union

SME: Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise

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At AI & Partners, we’re here to help you navigate the complexities of the EU AI Act, so you can focus on what matters—using AI to grow your business. We specialize in guiding companies through compliance with tailored solutions that fit your needs. Why us? Because we combine deep AI expertise with practical, actionable strategies to ensure you stay compliant and responsible, without losing sight of your goals. With our support, you get AI you can trust—safe, accountable, and aligned with the law.

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