



DIN

DIN Consumer Council



How do standards impact the lives of consumers?

Consumer protection is a basic market policy that strives to avoid imbalances between suppliers and consumers. It extends across product safety, quality assurance and consumer-friendly services and more.

Standardization can help achieve these protections, by setting regulations which require access to information. This makes products and services measurable and comparable. Standardized product information serves as a self-help resource, allowing consumers to make informed decisions on their purchases.

Beyond the relevant consumer protection laws and legislation, private standardization bodies lay down technical requirements for the assessment of the safety and performance of consumer goods. After all, these goods affect the lives of millions of people every day.

Thus it is essential to involve consumer policy experts whenever specific goods become subject to standardisation. More so, as the interaction between legislation and standardisation has become more intense and an ever-growing number of products and services are concerned.

Who makes the rules for whom? Is there balanced stakeholder participation? Do manufacturers themselves make decisions on the standards that will specify requirements for their products? To solve these challenges, standardization bodies ensure that all interested parties are included in a democratic, consensus-based act of self-regulation. To play a meaningful role in this process, the voice of consumer experts must be strongly represented.

This is the task of the DIN Consumer Council.

Who are we?

The DIN Consumer Council has been representing consumer interests in national, European and International standardization committees since 1974.



Consumer Council - Executive Committee

The Executive Committee consists of 7 members who represent different consumer organizations and consumer-related testing and research institutes.

- Federal Centre of Expertise on Accessibility
- Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing (BAM)
- Federal Office for Information Security
- DHB – Netzwerk (Professional association of household managers)
- Consumer advice center (VZ) Hessen
- Federation of German Consumer Organisations – vzbv
- Consumer Institute for Comparative Testing (Stiftung Warentest)

All members of the DIN-Consumer Council are volunteers and act independently of DIN interests.

The DIN-Consumer Council is largely financed by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV). DIN contributes financially and provides organizational support.

The Consumer Council consists of the Executive Committee, with members carrying out their function on a voluntary basis. Meanwhile office staff are employees working on DIN premises.



Consumer Council - Offices

The Consumer Council's offices are part of the DIN structure and its staff members are employees of DIN. They represent consumer interests in standardization committees based on resolutions of the Consumer Council Presidial Committee.



Consumer Council - Voluntary Consumer Representation

The permanent staff of the Consumer Council is supported by around 60 voluntary consumer representatives, who are nominated by the members of the Consumer Council for specific standardization projects. Volunteers are often highly-experienced individuals, that come from various consumer protection associations and organisations, consumer advisory centres, testing institutes, universities etc. Staff stands in close collaboration with each of them, to provide assistance in administrative and logistic matters.



What are our tasks?

Consumer Council – Presidial Committee

- sets**
 - priorities for participation in standards committees
 - consumer-relevant directives for standardization work
 - content-related guidelines for consumer-relevant topics in cooperation with Consumer Council offices
- decides**
 - on standardization requests from consumer representation and fundamental issues concerning the Consumer Council office
- appoints**
 - consumer representatives to standards committees

Consumer Council – Office

- monitors**
 - consumer-relevant standardization activities including related European legislation and other legal requirements
- identifies**
 - missing or inadequate standards (as interpreted by the consumer) by means of accident and product analyses, surveys, expert interviews and studies
- determines**
 - consumer positions in cooperation with consumer organizations, ministries or other consumer-related stakeholders
- implements**
 - consumer positions into draft standards and comments
- represents**
 - consumer positions in relevant national, European and international standards committees
- participates**
 - in committees of the association of the European consumer representation in standardization (ANEC) as well as in projects and events of the Committee on Consumer Policy (COPOLCO) of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO)
- supports**
 - voluntary consumer representatives who participate in standardization projects

Examples of our work

The work programme of DIN Consumer Council includes around 200 projects from different areas of standardization. Below are some examples.



CHILDREN'S SLEEP BAGS

It is crucial that our little ones are safe and sound while they sleep. From the consumer point of view, a high level of safety is imperative. The standard shall include requirements covering chemicals, reaction to fire as well as thermal properties. Hazards due to hyperthermia have to be eliminated. Small parts that could be ingested shall not be allowed and the entrapment of body parts shall be prevented.



CONSTRUCTION OF ACCESSIBLE BUILDINGS

The main goal of standardization in the construction of accessible buildings is that all people, regardless of their physical abilities, are able to participate equally in daily life. The relevant standards offer solutions which help implement this goal. They are applicable to new and existing buildings.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

They are an important source of information for consumers. Yet most of us have been frustrated at one time because we could not find the information we needed. Or we simply could not understand what was written. Good instructions for use provide all the information needed for the safe, efficient and effective use of a product. DIN EN 82079-1 specifies what needs to be taken into consideration when preparing instructions for use.



»COOK & CHILL« IN MASS CATERING

This method involves meals being prepared the usual way (up to 90% cooked) and then cooled down directly afterwards. Shortly before sale, the food is heated up again to the consumption temperature. The hygienic requirements are strict. The Consumer Council participated actively in the development of the relevant standard and worked towards a high level of health-related consumer protection.



FINANCIAL SERVICES

Standards can be the basis for individualized consulting and an informed choice of financial products. The Consumer Council participates in »Financial analysis for private households«, »Mobile banking« as well as »Standardized asset and risk analyses for private investors«. Consumers shall be well informed in order to assess their needs and goals, their financial resources and their risk profiles.



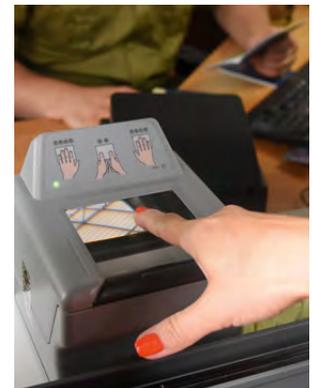
ELECTRIC BICYCLES

The Consumer Council is committed to realistic requirements for the mechanical and electric safety of electric bicycles in standardization. But safety requirements are only one aspect; from the consumer point of view, it is important that performance characteristics are covered as well. This includes the electric range of the electric assistance and an interoperable charging solution.



CONSUMER-RELEVANT TEST PROCEDURES

Home appliances shall serve their purpose using as little energy and water (if applicable) as absolutely necessary. The energy label provides relevant information when choosing an energy-efficient appliance. European test standards are the basis for the given values and classes. It is important for consumers that standardized test procedures are reproducible but also reflect use in real life as much as possible.



USABLE SYSTEMS AND DEVICES

When developing systems and devices, the focus is often on security and data protection. A basic requirement is easy and accessible use. That applies to devices like ATMs or ticket machines but also to quite complex systems like automated border controls. Safety and data protection measures need to be easily comprehensible and feasible for the user.



Would you like to get involved as a voluntary consumer representative?

The number of consumer relevant standardization projects sometimes exceeds not only the resources of the Consumer Council staff but also their technical expertise.

That is why cooperation with voluntary consumer representatives is a vital part of consumer representation in standardization.

They work primarily as representatives of the Consumer Council in national standards committees, but also occasionally in European and international standards committees.

If you are independent from the supply side and would like to use your technical expertise in the spirit of consumer interests, please contact us.

More information:
www.din.de/go/verbraucherrat



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