



ORGALIME POSITION ON COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 1999/103/EC OF 24 JANUARY 2000 RELATING TO UNITS OF MEASUREMENT

16 March 2006

Introduction

Orgalime represents the mechanical, electrical, electronic and metalworking industries in 23 European countries. We speak for 34 trade federations representing over 130,000 companies. These industries, the vast majority of which are small and medium size enterprises, employ some 7 million people and, in 2004, accounted for 1,235 billion Euro of output, that is over a quarter of the EU's manufacturing output and a third of its manufactured exports. Our industry is highly dependent on efficient trade flows both for our inputs which our companies source worldwide and for our exports.

Background and comments

Directive 1999/103/EC relating to units of measurement has postponed the date of possible use of supplementary indications, regulated in Directive 80/181/EEC to 31 December 2009. In addition, the Directive states that the application of Directive 80/181/EEC should be re-examined and appropriate measures should be taken towards achieving a global system of measurements based on SI units.

In its position of 16 March 1998, Orgalime supported the aim of the European Commission to ensure standardization on SI units, because the worldwide use of one system for units will, without doubt, provide considerable benefits to industry and consumers alike. However, as we believe that the process to achieve this should not cause prejudice to manufacturers, we requested that the Commission should allow the use of supplementary indications (so called dual labelling) on products, using both SI and other units in order to be able to serve the needs of the markets for engineering products.

Even if engineering companies, many of which manufacture at a global level, have already made considerable efforts to achieve the goal of standardising on SI units, they are still faced with a number of practical problems:

- Although in many countries SI units are the standard, this is by no means universal practice. In certain countries in the European Union, or outside it, units other than SI are still used and still have to be used.
- In the engineering industry there are often specific requirements for technical documentation dictated by the requirements of the international market. Thus catalogues for machinery or parts may, in general, use the SI unit, but a corresponding additional unit is often included in brackets.
- Companies use sub-assemblies which they incorporate into their final products which may include components labelled in units other than SI.

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In its 1998 position, Orgalime also suggested that the European Commission should undertake a campaign to inform users and to promote the benefits of worldwide standardization on SI units. We believe that such communication, in collaboration with countries such as the US, are essential conditions to encourage a smooth and gradual transition to a single worldwide standardised system. It was our view in 1998 and still is today, that this is a concrete action that the Commission could and should undertake in the framework of transatlantic cooperation.

We also believe that, on the contrary, further regulation aiming at driving change will be counterproductive. Therefore, we urge the Commission to refrain from introducing any further legally enforced time frame for introducing obligatory marking in SI units only within the EU.

Orgalime conclusion

Orgalime believes that the present issue which has been reappearing on the regulatory agenda since the 1970s needs to be dealt with once and for all, while avoiding taking measures that would damage the competitiveness of European engineering manufacturers. In conclusion:

- Orgalime fully supports the aim of the European Commission to ensure standardisation on SI units. This is a logical and welcome goal and we hope that the Commission will take steps to support this goal with appropriate communication.
- In a spirit of better regulation and in order to avoid imposing unnecessary costs and burdens on European engineering companies, it should be left up to each market segment to judge the speed at which it adopts the SI units system, if it has not already done so.
- The possibility to label products and have documentation using both SI and other units for as long as required by the market must therefore, in our view, be perpetuated.

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