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- The EC is also concerned to bring about, as soon as possible, the mutual recognition of testing and certification regimes in member states. The proposed framework for mutual recognition in this area includes creating standard procedures for assessing conformity with regulations, harmonized standards for QA and laboratory practices, an organization to coordinate conformity assessment and support for creating new institutions as needed, and the negotiation of mutual recognition agreements with third countries.

From Policy into Practice

- Much progress has been made in legislating some shared standards and proposals for harmonizing others, but implementation has not been as rapid.
- The EC Commission therefore prepared a Green Paper focussing on the problems and proposing solutions. Much of the emphasis is on private sector participation, procedural changes to expedite work, new organizations (where necessary), and obtaining international cooperation.
- EFTA countries have laid the groundwork for virtually complete participation in the new EC policy. Traditional EFTA membership in CEN and CENELEC has been supplemented by EC-EFTA cooperation agreements concerning the exchange of information about technical regulations and standards.
- In addition, if the EFTA countries adopt the EN 29000 and EN 45000 standards, they may also conclude agreements with the EC for mutual recognition of testing and certification. A major step in this direction was the April 1990 EC-EFTA agreement with CEN and CENELEC to establish the EOTC. These initiatives could further improve market access for EFTA countries, who already enjoy a duty-free access to the EC not available to Canadian exporters.

EC Policy and Canadian Trade Interests

- Certain product sectors (viz., food stuffs, information technology, telecommunications, and construction products), whose standardization the EC Commission has cited as important, are also important from the viewpoint of Canadian exporters.
 - Traditional technical differences between the EC and Canada are not likely to disappear under the new policy. These differences evolved for reasons such as the local preferences of consumers and government procurement administrators for voluntary national standards on food composition, residential construction, and so on. Technical regulations also reflect varying approaches to public safety, health, and environmental issues.
 - However, Canadian exporters can broaden their market to all EC members if they meet either the voluntary national standards of one member state or the newly emerging "European standards".
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