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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

- As part of the Europe 1992 initiative, which includes free internal movement of goods, the EC is seeking to remove technical barriers to trade between member states. "Reference to standards" is also expected to open markets for government procurement in member states.
- The creation of the "internal market" is important to businesses in the Community.
- The EC cooperates with national, regional, and international standards organizations.
- Market access for, and acceptance and competitiveness of, Canadian exports to the EC are affected by technical regulations, voluntary standards, and conformity procedures that differ from one member state to another.
- The EC has recently adopted an ambitious, comprehensive, and complex policy for eliminating technical barriers, turning much control over to non-governmental bodies and (possibly) to the EC Commission.

## EC Policy on Standards

- The objectives of the new EC policy are to remove existing technical barriers, to prevent new barriers being erected, and to encourage industrial development in the Community, particularly competitiveness and technological adaptation in the information technology, telecommunications, construction, and food products sectors.
  - In the past, the EC has tried to minimize technical barriers by challenging certain national standards in the European Court of Justice.
  - "Mutual recognition" of voluntary national standards is now being enforced through European Court challenges based on earlier findings, mainly the 1979 Cassis de Dijon case. A recent example is the October 1990 finding against minimum fat restrictions in Italian regulations for cheese.
  - Technical regulations on a number of products, such as automobiles and electronics, were harmonized in 200 detailed EC Directives ("old approach").
  - Harmonization of technical regulations is now being effected by legislating "essential requirements" related to health, safety, and environmental protection. The "essential requirements" are then incorporated into European standards by CEN, CENELEC, and ETSI, who have been given mandates and financial assistance by the EC Commission.
  - Detailed technical standards are nevertheless still being legislated in certain sectors (i.e., motor vehicles, tractors, food products, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals).
  - Information procedures have been put in place to help prevent the creation of new technical barriers in member states.
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