

Set harmonised requirements for reverification of weighing instruments

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Weighed products move through the whole of the European single market without extra controls. For example, a package of crisps can be produced in one country and be distributed all over Europe. Customers buying such a bag in a supermarket should be able to be sure that the weighed value provided is correct. So, if the bag indicates it includes 200 grams, the customer is expecting it contains at least 200 grams. Where this just should not happen in consumer products it might be even fatal in industries such as pharmaceuticals.

To get this guarantee, high-quality weighing instruments are needed. Therefore, European legislation is in place to ensure the weighing instruments meet minimum requirements regarding reliability and accuracy when being placed on the market. National legislation is in force to ensure that the weighing instruments keep functioning correctly during its lifetime. This national legislation obliges, for example, scale operators to do a periodic reverification by a private entity or government body and a subsequent reverification or a reverification after repairing the instrument. Unfortunately, these national requirements differ significantly between EU Member States, making it more cumbersome to provide cross-border services and not providing the optimal consumer protection.

Therefore, the European weighing industry, represented by CECIP, is convinced that harmonisation of these national reverification requirements will be beneficial for the competitiveness of the industry and will improve customer protection.

Improvement of consumer protections

Customers buying products and materials from another EU Member State should be able to completely trust the weighed value indicated of the product or material that is bought. Particularly today where more and more products are traded via internet and it is not clear for the consumer where the products are weighed. If it is weighed in another EU Member State, the consumer should be ensured the weighing instrument used functions correctly. Additionally, a weighing instrument that is used outside the country where it is "originally" reverified (e.g. a scale on a market) should be completely trusted. Independently where, how and by whom a reverification takes place, the weighing instrument should be functioning

correctly, precise and accurately. Hence, the (minimum) requirements set at EU level and in national legislation need to be state-of-the-art and should take into account the constant changes in weighing technologies.

CECIP believes that at the moment there is room for improvement with respect to the national reverification requirements in several countries. On the one hand reverifications can be improved regarding reliability and accuracy, on the other hand many differences in national requirements don't provide any added value now. On the contrary, the obstacles introduced in national legislation could result in making these markets difficult to enter. To ensure consumers can trust the products they buy from each country in Europe it is necessary to enhance these reverification requirements. CECIP is convinced that this can be done best at European level considering the required expertise and the European-wide impact on consumers. Setting minimum reverification requirements or harmonising the requirements at European level is the best solution to achieve customer's protection in the whole of Europe.

Strengthen the EU single market by harmonisation

Harmonisation will clearly benefit the competitiveness of the industry. Take an SME having its headquarter in an EU Member State as an example. Such a company usually has one production site taking care of all the requirements relevant to the measuring instrument. This includes the requirements for legal metrology for both, placing on the market and reverification.

Such a company that currently wants to carry out reverification services in another EU Member State needs to follow different procedures in each Member States. However, they cannot afford a legal metrology expert in each Member State to follow up all the differences. Hence, these differences create barriers to trade for these companies.

Even if a company overcomes this hurdle and decides to start activities in another country it requires extra administration to be in compliance with the national legislation in each country. For example, quality systems and corresponding procedures need to be adjusted to comply with national requirements and specifications. This can be seen in the market for Point of Sales systems where differing national requirements create different burdens for economic operators.

One of the pillars of the European cooperation is the free movement of goods and services. Harmonisation of reverification requirements would make it easier for private entities including manufacturers and particularly SMEs to provide cross-border services and would reduce administrative burdens.

Harmonise reverification requirements in EU

Harmonisation of reverification requirements will have clear benefits for the competitiveness of the European industry as well as customer and consumer protection.

Therefore, CECIP calls on the European Commission and Member States to initiate actions that could result in further harmonisation. This could be, for example, legislation that harmonises reverification requirements, minimum requirements with respect to harmonisation of national legislation or recommendations on national legislation. Inspiration could be found in existing EU legislation and OIML documents such as OIML D3 and D20. The European weighing industry is open to discuss the possibilities.

CECIP (www.cecip.eu) is the European association representing the weighing instrument industry. Founded in 1958, CECIP has currently members in 14 countries. The weighing instrument industry in Europe is world leader and consists of around 700 companies that are mostly SMEs. The total turnover is approximately 3 billion euro and the industry employ about 50.000 persons.

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