

EU AND THE US EXTEND SCIENTIFIC CO-OPERATION ON STANDARDS AND MEASUREMENTS

Lowered tariffs and harmonised standards – this is where the real savings for businesses and consumers will be achieved in the future free trade agreement between the EU and the US. To help reach the goal of having compatible standards across the both sides of the Atlantic, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and the US National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) today agreed to expand their current scientific co-operation to 10 different areas.

The trade and investment agreement being negotiated between the EU and the US, known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), aims to remove barriers such as tariffs, unnecessary regulation and restrictions on investments in a wide range of sectors and allow companies to sell and buy goods and invest easier on the other side of the Atlantic. It's good news for jobs, too. According to different studies, once in place, the agreement will save millions of euros to companies and create hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Differences in technical regulations, standards and certifications cost time and money: when a car is declared safe according EU regulations, if imported in the US, it still has to undergo a safety check. Indeed, the negotiations will address those barriers that lie behind the customs border – the unnecessary rules and regulations, resulting from different standards.

Speaking at the JRC-NIST Implementing Arrangement signing ceremony in Washington, JRC Director General Dominique Ristori emphasised the importance of the agreement, reached after intensive discussion by the two sides in the last months. "In the light of the launch of the first round of negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, our cooperation on standards and measurements is particularly relevant", he said. "The Implementing Arrangement we signed today will create an overarching framework for a cross-Atlantic cooperation on standards and measurements in a wide range of areas, such as energy (energy efficiency, smart grids and interoperability), transport – including standardisation to support the deployment of electro-mobility – nanotechnology, healthcare and clinical measurements as well as many others. It will also serve as a leading example in the process towards setting global standards".

Patrick Gallagher, NIST's Director said: "Today we affirm this relationship and look forward to new and exciting areas of interaction that will ultimately serve to support the relationship between the European Union and the United States. By working together, we can take advantage of each other's respective strengths to further the science. And ultimately, we will benefit from being on the same page as the science matures and allows us to establish and implement these new technologies," he said.

The respective work on standardisation has helped forge closer relations between the JRC, the Commission's in-house science service, and NIST over the last year. This Arrangement represents a fresh boost to transatlantic scientific co-operation and a new momentum in the collaboration between two natural partners. Both JRC and NIST have the strategic goal to support competitiveness and economic growth. The Implementing Arrangement signed today encompasses 10 (non-exhaustive) areas related to standards and measurements. Environment and climate, energy, transport and security feature high on the collaborative research agenda.

Healthcare and clinical measurements, food safety and nutrition, as well as nanotechnology will be subject of the development and harmonisation of methods, indicators and documentary standards. Besides reference materials in a range of areas, the co-operation will include research on civil engineering structures and emerging Information and communication technologies (ICT), as well as marine optical radiometry.

BACKGROUND

The Implementing Arrangement covers scientific cooperation related to standards and measurements and is concluded under the auspices of the Agreement for Scientific and Technological Cooperation between the EU

and US signed in 1997. Its purpose is to form an overarching arrangement, including and expanding on the previous co-operation. The planned activities include access to each other's scientific infrastructure, exchange of scientific and technological information, exchange of experts and support to the training of scientists, engineers and technical experts. The arrangement is signed for five years and can be prolonged.