

**Smart Homes and CENELEC Workshop Agreements**  
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The smart home has been a long time coming but the situation is that the home has, so far, failed to make the progress that the car has. We now expect that our cars will unlock and disarm the security system with a touch on the key-fob in our pocket, that the interior light will come on as soon as we open the door if not before, that sophisticated electronics will manage the engine both for performance and environment and the brakes for maximum safety and adhesion, that high quality entertainment facilities (audio and video for rear seat passengers) will be built-in and the interior environment will be managed for us. In fact the modern car is so smart that we don't regard it as smart – merely sensible and desirable.

Today the pace of the move towards digital electronics for home and appliance control, for communication, for computing and for entertainment – in short for everything – offers an achievable vision of the smart home which is as responsive to our needs as the modern car. A home where our energy consumption is managed to provide comfort without waste, where appliances and systems detect and correct minor problems, where our comfort and security can be assured and where we can access entertainment, information and communication wherever we want. A smart home can be sensible and desirable too.

There is a critical difference. The car is ultimately the responsibility of a single supplier and is delivered as a single unit. The home is the responsibility of many vendors and is steadily improved over time as our needs require and our finances permit. Delivering the smart home requires the co-operation of many distinct service and product suppliers operating in different industries and with different routes to market. The traditional approach to the high degree of standardisation necessary to achieve this co-operation has sometimes proved difficult. Many of the parties involved sit in different technical committees within different standardisation bodies and, other than exchanging occasional liaison statements, have little contact within the standardisation environment. Less progress has been made than industry and European consumers deserve.

There is now an alternative. CENELEC is introducing the concept of “workshop agreements” which provide a structured environment for co-operation between interested parties to develop together the interface standards that permit one device to talk to another, one industry to work with another and the smart home to be delivered economically.

Workshop agreements are not European Standards. They are consensus documents involving only the participants and without the development of the wider European consensus that characterises European Standards. Their use is entirely voluntary and restricted to those who find them useful and there is no requirement for conflicting documents to be withdrawn. Above all the process is rapid, simple and direct.