



Breakfast Briefing: The Future of the Machinery Directive

European Parliament, Members' Salon
Thursday, 5 December 2019
08.00 - 09.30

REPORT



Maria Grapini, MEP

The Machinery Directive is, in general, a good piece of legislation and any future revision should be characterised by continuity rather than revolutionary changes. This was the main outcome of the breakfast meeting organised by EFM and CECIMO and hosted by Maria Grapini MEP at the European Parliament on 5 December 2019.

The breakfast provided the opportunity to members of the European Parliament, representatives from the machine tool and machinery sectors and the European Commission to exchange about the main issues related to a future revision of the Directive.

The Machinery Directive is a good piece of legislation

Barbara Bonvissuto, Head of Unit Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing Systems at DG GROW, stressed that the outcome of the evaluation of the Machinery Directive indicated it was a very good piece of legislation. The Directive was technology neutral and it had left enough room for manufacturers to innovate. Nevertheless, she pointed out that there were some aspects that would need to be looked at, but these should not lead to big changes. She referred to an evolution rather than a revolution in relation to a future revision.

Massimo Carboniero, Chair of the CECIMO Technical Committee, highlighted that the experience of his company with the Directive had been positive. He agreed the Directive had been successful in coping with technological developments thanks to the new approach principles followed when creating it.

Juan Andueza, General Manager of DIMECO, a small French and Spanish machine tool company, also talked positively about the Machinery Directive and highlighted that continuity is essential in relation to its possible revision. He highlighted that any future revision of the Directive should allow companies to improve their procedures but there was no need for exponential change. Rather than changes in legislation he stressed that SMEs needed to have good application guidance and harmonised standards that would support them to implement the requirements of legislation into an easy and understandable way.

To this respect, Filip Geerts, CECIMO Director General highlighted that from the point of view of businesses, having a stable legal



Barbara Bonvissuto, European Commission



Massimo Carboniero, Chair CECIMO Technical Committee

framework offers the right conditions to invest, innovate and create jobs, as essential.

Pernille Weiss, member of the Industry, Research & Energy Committee at the European Parliament, advocated for an evidence-based approach. She pointed out that policy makers should not constantly revise legislation if this was working well. She added she hoped for the impact assessment being carried out by the Commission not to lead to a revision of the Directive.

An approach considering new digital technologies

Mrs Bonvissuto pointed out that the EU needed to grasp the opportunities offered by digitization and in that respect, a legal framework conducive to innovation was instrumental. She added that a clear and predictable legal framework was of paramount importance to ensure a level playing field for European businesses in an increasingly digitalized market. She added some stakeholders were advocating for greater legal clarity in the essential requirements relevant for digital technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). At the same time, there was a need to take a careful and proportionate approach, so as to ensure continuous innovation.

Massimo Carboniero pointed out that although AI was not new and had evolved considerably in the last decades, the development of relevant applications in the machine tool and manufacturing technologies sector was limited. Some companies in the machinery sector had started to explore the possibilities of such technologies in applications such as process optimization, predictive maintenance or condition monitoring, but these applications were still at an early development stage.

Marcel Dutrieux, Manager European Product Integrity at The Toro Company pointed out that introducing additional requirements for new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence could be required, but before discussing specific requirements it was necessary to be clear about the boundaries and have a discussion based on facts and what was technologically possible rather than on science fiction movies. A key point for the industry was that any new requirements covering new technology, should not have

a negative impact (i.e. additional requirements) on current products already compliant to the current legal text.

Juan Andueza supported the possibility to provide instructions on digital format. He highlighted the main driver for moving to online manuals were the advantages they provided in relation to updating, quicker search for relevant information and reduction of environmental impact. Complex machinery was normally accompanied by complex manuals, and digital solutions would allow to find the right information quickly, especially if integrated with augmented reality solutions.

To this respect, Marcel Dutrieux pointed out that the specific requirement for paper documentation had been added to the guidelines on the implementation of the Directive and that any future legislation needed to be clear and in line with the possibilities offered by new technologies.

Cybersecurity and safety

The increasing digitisation of industry means that cybersecurity is becoming a major issue. Massimo Carboniero and Marcel Dutrieux stressed that cybersecurity was an issue involving several actors and that it did not only depend on machine builders.

Massimo Carboniero pointed out that the scope of the Machinery Directive was limited to establish essential requirements for manufacturers, placing machinery for the first time in the EU market. Therefore, the inclusion of cybersecurity requirements in a revised Directive would not lead to an effective approach to cybersecurity. It could instead open the way to a situation where different sectorial pieces of legislation would include different and inconsistent requirements on cybersecurity.

The relation between possible cybersecurity requirements in the Machinery and Radio Equipment Directives and the schemes to be developed under the Cybersecurity Act were raised by the audience.

Pernille Weiss stated that different problems should be tackled in the right Directives sylos and called for a stronger



From left to right: Hans-Martin Schneeberger (CECIMO President), Maria Grapini MEP, Anthony Fell (EFM), Marcel Dutrieux (The Toro Company) and Juan Andueza (DIMECO)

focus on infrastructure. Barbara Bonvissuto pointed out that the approach followed by the Commission in relation to new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and cybersecurity was a combination of horizontal and product specific legislation. Requirements in the Machinery Directive related to cybersecurity would be limited to those aspects that were relevant in relation to safety.

The importance of market surveillance and the international dimension

Filip Geerts stressed that although mainly composed by SMEs, the machine tool and machinery sectors had a strong international dimension. More than three quarters of the production from the companies represented by CECIMO was shipped abroad, and around half of it was exported outside Europe. Keeping its competitiveness at international level was therefore very important.

The importance of market surveillance to this respect was highlighted by different speakers and members of the audience. Juan Andueza pointed out that as important as having a clear and stable legal framework was to enforce it. A lack of effective and consistent application of law provides those manufacturers, that did not comply with European regulations, an unfair comparative advantage. Related to the issue of market surveillance, Barbara Bonvissuto highlighted the adoption of the new Regulation on enforcement and compliance that tried to re-enforce and improve the coordination of market surveillance activities at European level.

The relation to standardisation

The importance of standardisation in relation to any future revision of the Machinery Directive was also discussed. Massimo Carboniero pointed out that massive changes of the Directive would have a deep impact on standards. The development of a new set of standards, aligned to new requirements could take from 3 to 5 years or even more. This could also create difficulties for companies since until standards were not updated, they would not benefit from their support in ensuring the conformity of products. Participants also raised the need to work harder to improve the process of citation of harmonised standards in the Official Journal and to ensure standards were developed faster. Juan Andueza stressed that faster delivery of standards would also facilitate the involvement of companies in the standardisation process. This was especially the case of SMEs which had more limited resources.

A proposal for a new Directive in 2021

Barbara Bonvissuto explained a consultant was carrying out an impact assessment study on the revision of the Directive on behalf of the Commission. As part of the study they were analysing the results of the open public consultation that took place in Summer 2019 and completing them with targeted consultations and interviews. The study would be published in the first quarter of 2020. On that basis and subject to political validation by the new Commission, a proposal for a new Directive was expected beginning of 2021. The intention was to keep the structure of new approach legislation, change the Directive into a Regulation and align it to the New Legislative Framework. In addition to the need for changes to consider new technologies, possible improvements in the scope and definitions of the Directive were also being looked at.



Pernille Weiss, MEP



Juan Andueza, DIMECO



Marcel Dutrieux, The Toro Company



Filip Geerts, CECIMO