

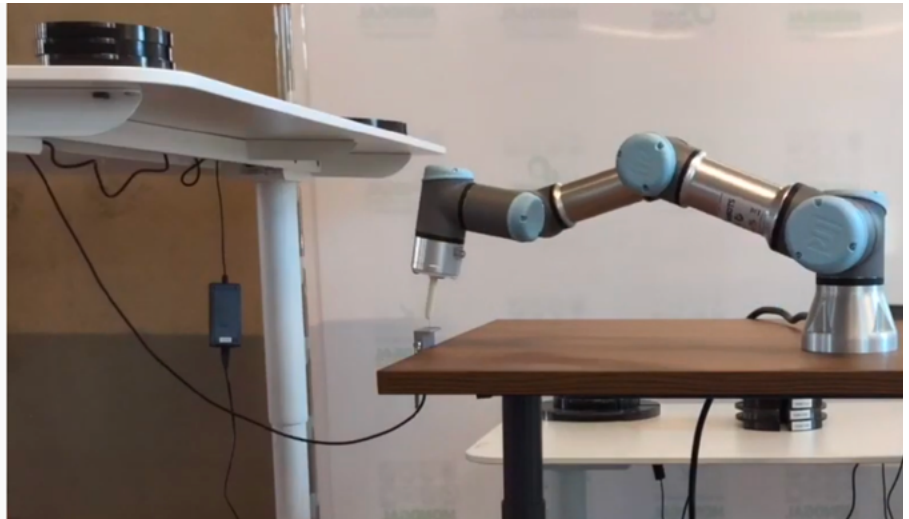
New standard projects blooming in spring

Annamaria Franz

April 2021

The beginning of April saw the birth of an important European standard project. Working group 9 of the CEN 207 technical committee has in fact initiated **prEN 17684**, entitled **Furniture - Electrically operated - Mechanical safety requirements**.

Let's see why this news is so important. Electrically operated furniture falls within the definition of **machine** and therefore in the European market is subject to the CE marking in accordance with the **Machinery Directive 2006/42/EC**.



The directive establishes a number of **essential health and safety requirements** and it is the manufacturer's obligation to verify and demonstrate that its product meets them. These essential requirements refer to all types of machines (from a reclining chair to a circular saw...) and therefore are expressed in rather general terms. The possible existence of a product technical standard "harmonized" to the directive provides an important tool to the manufacturer, who by satisfying it also obtains the "presumption of conformity" to the directive.

At the moment, among all the CEN standards harmonized to the machinery directive, those that could be used by furniture manufacturers are **UNI EN ISO 12100:2010** which specifies the basic terminology and principles for risk assessment and reduction but which should be withdrawn because it no longer meets the requirements to which it intends to refer (see Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/436 of 18 March 2019 relating to harmonized standards for machinery drawn up in support of Directive 2006/42/EC), **UNI EN ISO 13854:2020** which provides the minimum distances to avoid crushing parts of the human body, and possibly other harmonized standards relating to products that can be considered similar. As regards the CENELEC standards, relating to electrical aspects, the **CEI EN 60335-1:2012** generally covers the safety of electrical appliances for domestic use and similar. There would also be the international standard **IEC 60335-2-116:2019** which provides special requirements for furniture with electrically powered parts, which, however, has not yet been implemented at European level and therefore is not even harmonized with the directive. The complete and updated list of standards harmonized with the Machinery Directive is here: https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/european-standards/harmonised-standards/machinery_en.

Even in the absence of a harmonized standard, the obligation to mark and comply with the requirements of the directive remains. Conformity to the requirements of the directive is then evaluated by applying technical standards referring to the product or other reference documents. This is what Catas has been doing for some time in the daily work of accompanying companies in the creation of the technical file for their product.

In the meantime, to fill this gap, the CEN 207 Technical Committee that deals with furniture has begun to work in synergy with the CLC 61 Technical Committee that deals with household and similar electrical appliances for the publication of **two complementary standards**: one focused on the mechanical safety requirements to be drawn up in the CEN context and one focused on electrical safety which could roughly be the transposition in the European context of the international IEC 60335-2-116.

New standard projects blooming in spring

Annamaria Franz

As the CENELEC standard is almost ready, CEN had to step on the accelerator and therefore a first standard proposal was reached in record time, precisely the recently launched prEN 17684. This document aims to cover the essential safety requirements of motorized furniture relating to the aspects of loss of **stability, strength and mechanical durability** and finally **crushing, compression and entrapment of parts of the human body**. It applies to **all types of furniture** for domestic and non-domestic use, in relation to the phase of use, considering the people who use the product and those who may be in the vicinity of the product itself; it excludes requirements for children under the age of 4.

What happens now?

The publication of a standard harmonized to a directive follows a special process. Once the public investigation is over and before reaching the formal vote, the standard is subject to the evaluation by a “**HAS Consultant**”, an independent expert appointed by the European Commission.

This step is fundamental and its positive outcome can by no means be taken for granted, on the contrary there are numerous standards written under mandate that are “rejected” at this stage and can no longer be published. If the revision by the HAS Consultant gives a positive result, the standard can come to light and its reference is also published in the Official Journal of the European Community (OJEU). To facilitate a positive assessment by the HAS Consultant, the Technical Committee has already started the “pre-assessment” procedure, ie the preliminary analysis of the text by the HAS Consultant to favor a possible positive outcome of the formal assessment.

A standard harmonized to the machinery directive has a further peculiarity, in its very structure, as it must always include an annex, the so-called “**Annex ZA**” which lists the essential requirements of the directive and the correspondent clauses of the standard in which they are addressed. In the case of two standards harmonized to the same directive, one published by CEN and one by CENELEC, the correct and clear subdivision of the essential requirements is essential to avoid overlapping, contradictions and gaps; this is one of the aspects that must be evaluated by the HAS Consultant.

Having followed the drafting of this standard from the beginning and shared the complex dynamics of interaction between the CEN and CENELEC groups involved, we believe that the path of this document towards publication will not be easy. On the other hand, looking at the growing activity we carry out in support of companies both in the risk assessment and in the drafting of the technical file and all the documentation for the CE marking, we really hope that a harmonized standard, which would greatly facilitate us in this work, will be available in a short time.

For info:

Annamaria Franz
+39 0432 747241
franz@catas.com

All rights reserved

Reproduction or duplication of the contents of this article is authorized under condition that the source
- © CATAS - San Giovanni al Natisone - Udine - Italy is being cited