



EUROPEAN NORM - EN 15017

EFFS Article for Thanos Magazine on the Importance of Standards

The European Federation of Funeral Services (EFFS) aims to provide knowledge, tools and instruments for their members in 29 countries across Europe and worldwide, in order to assist in **implementing and upholding** the highest possible quality of services in the funeral profession.

Almost 20 years ago, in the absence of common European legislation for services in the funeral sector, it became very apparent that a **standard of services** was necessary and for that purpose, the first European Norm (EN15017) was published in 2005. Several years later, in line with the changing landscape in the funeral sector, it again became quite apparent that an update was imminent and following a three-year process, the current EN15017 was published in 2019.

Today, many funeral professionals throughout Europe voluntarily perform their services according to the guidelines and standards set forth in the EN15017. At the same time, continuing to increase awareness of the EN15017 throughout Europe is of the utmost importance to uphold the quality of services provided in our sector.

The establishment of a **European Norm (EN)** involves an extremely structured process overseen by European standardization organizations, in the case of the EN15017, by the **European Committee for Standardization (CEN)** located in Brussels, Belgium.

As a first step, a cooperation between the European Federation of Funeral Services (EFFS), the Austrian Standards Institute (ASI) and the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) was put in writing, immediately followed by the Technical Committee Formation (see 4. below) The TC 448, chaired by Anke Teraa, Executive Director of the EFFS, comprised representatives from all across Europe, i.e. 23 members from 12 countries. Once the European Technical Committee was formed, so-called national mirror committees were put in place in all involved countries and all parties worked hand-in-hand throughout each step of the process.

How is a **European Norm** established? Here's the process.

1. **Identification of Need:** The process typically begins with the identification of a need for a new standard or the revision of an existing one. This need can arise from technological developments, changes in regulations, industry requirements, or requests from stakeholders.
2. **Proposal and Initiation:** The proposal for a new standard or revision is submitted to the relevant standardization organization (CEN). This proposal can come from various sources, including industry associations, national standards bodies, regulatory authorities, and other stakeholders.



3. **Preparation of Work Programme:** Once the proposal is accepted, the standardization organization develops a work programme outlining the scope, objectives, timeline, and resources required for the standardization project.
4. **Technical Committee (TC) Formation:** A technical committee is established to develop the standard. This committee comprises experts, stakeholders, and representatives from relevant industries, organizations, and other interested parties.
5. **Drafting Process:** The drafting process involves the development of the standard's content, including technical specifications, requirements, guidelines, and terminology. The technical committee or working group collaborates to review existing practices, research, and technical developments to inform the content of the standard.
6. **Consultation and Consensus Building:** Throughout the drafting process, there are opportunities for public consultation and stakeholder feedback. This helps ensure that the standard reflects a consensus among relevant parties and addresses the needs and concerns of stakeholders.
7. **Approval and Formal Vote:** Once the draft standard is finalized, it undergoes a formal approval process. Members vote on the adoption of the standard, considering factors such as technical accuracy, relevance, and consensus among stakeholders.
8. **Ratification and Publication:** If the draft standard receives sufficient support and meets the established criteria, it is ratified and published as a European Norm (EN). The EN is made publicly available and becomes part of the European standardization system.

After a period of three years and several TC 448 meetings, where formal votes were cast throughout the drafting and consensus process, a last round of final approval and formal vote, as well as a public inquiry as the very last step, the final draft went to publication.

The EN15017 is adhered to on a voluntary basis and takes precedence above any local norms. (Note: A Norm, be it European or national, at no time takes precedence over the law.) In selected countries, adherence to the EN15017 has even become a prerequisite for admission to national associations or being recognised as a provider of quality service. A certification process is in place on a stand-alone basis in several countries and as a next logical step, the EFFS will be working on setting up a European-wide certification.

The EN15017 is a 54-page European Norm (EN) and pertains specifically to our wide range of funeral services, aiming to ensure a **minimum level** of quality, transparency, and professionalism, hence making adherence to the EN achievable for as many countries and professionals as possible within our sector. One of our main concerns during the process leading up to publication in 2019 was to ensure that regardless of varied quality practices, some higher, some lower, that each and every country could realistically adhere to a minimum. Several countries voluntarily provide more than the minimum and this is most certainly the direction we very much like to see.



What scope does the EN15017 cover?

The EN15017 provides a broad framework for standardising practices and meeting minimum requirements in terms of quality, transparency, and respect for cultural and religious diversity in the following key sections. Each section provides extensive details and guidelines under these main categories.

- Education
- Advisory services
- Funeral facilities
- Transport of deceased persons or human remains
- Care of the deceased
- Online services
- Quality management

(Note: the EN15017 can be purchased with immediate download here: https://shop.austrian-standards.at/action/de/public/details/664575/OENORM_EN_15017_2019_11_01;jsessionid=92CF1607D8B19C506DD1DBC1E6D49A19)

Whilst setting forth quality standards for funeral service providers, covering the afore-mentioned key areas, the EN15017 helps to protect consumers by adhering to clear guidelines. The EN15017 also helps to promote transparency and accountability in the funeral sector and at the same time promotes consistency in funeral practices across different countries and different cultures. All in all **a solid foundation** for providing our services to the bereaved with professionalism, dignity and respect.

We therefore encourage and urge all funeral professionals to adhere to the EN15017 and to continue with their efforts to increase awareness and recognition of the EN 15017 as a holistic framework of guidelines for our profession.

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