

## Common USB Phone Charger

Two EU standards bodies have delivered standards for a universal micro **USB** phone charger, which will let Europeans use one charger for multiple phones, an idea, which came through as a Bulgarian patent.

On Wednesday, the European Committee for Electrotechnical **Standardization** (CENELEC) and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) released charger standards for data-enable **mobile phones**, or phones that can be connected to a computer.

Technical specifications for chargers drawn up by the **European Commission** have won the backing of 14 major mobile phone producers such as Nokia, Research In Motion, Apple and Samsung. The first universal chargers produced to the specifications are expected to be available in early 2011. The process to create common chargers began in June 2009 when the Commission won pledges from phone firms to back any standards it drew up.

All mobile phones on the European market will have to use a standard charger after the European Parliament voted on a directive on 13 March 2014. The directive passed with 550 votes in favour, with 12 against and 8 abstentions. Following formal approval by the European Council, member states will be given two years to import the rules into national laws and then manufacturers would have a further year to comply. That means it would be 2017 before it came into full effect.

However, media from across the EU reporting the **standardization** omit to mention that the idea for a common mobile phone charger originated in Bulgaria a few years ago, with former Bulgarian Foreign Minister **Solomon Passy** (2001-2005) and his wife, **Gergana Passy**, former Bulgarian Minister of EU Affairs in the same Cabinet.

"We are very proud – Gergana and I – that this idea, which started as a joke – turned into a very solid Bulgarian contribution to the European technological process. Our battle for this initiative started in Bulgaria, went through the **European Commission**, the world GSM organization, the World Telecommunications Union of the UN, and ended with the **European**

**Commission's** decision to introduce the common chargers starting in 2011. I am glad that a Bulgarian engineer and inventor – **Ivan Batsarov** – approached me and Gergana with the idea to patent elements of this common mobile phone charger, which is what we did, and the patent is Bulgarian," **Solomon Passy**, who is now the President of the Atlantic Club in Bulgaria, told the 24 Chasa Daily in an interview in 2010.

Passy has pointed out that the introduction of the universal chargers in the EU will save about 13 million metric tons of carbon emissions and about 16-17 million metric tons of electronic waste per year.

"This is a colossal contribution on part of Bulgaria for protection of the global environment. Bulgaria has demonstrated that a small country, an EU newcomer can change established EU practices in a positive direction. The Bulgarian victory with the initiative for a common mobile phone charger has shown that our country has dozens of fields in which it can share its know-how such as standardized batteries for **mobile phones**, computers, laptops, all the way to standardized remote controls of audio and TV equipment," Passy states.

Passy believes that, building upon the single charger initiative, the Bulgarian government can become a "spokesperson of the EU" with respect to the economic and environmental potential of technological **standardization** especially in the context of global meetings on climate change such as the ones in Copenhagen in 2009 and Cancun in 2010. Passy has shared this idea with Bulgarian Prime Minister Borisov and the Cabinet, and is hopeful that in 2011 Bulgaria will see developments in this direction.

The then **EU Commissioner** for Industry and Entrepreneurship, **Antonio Tajani**, has expressed his satisfaction with the introduction of the single chargers in 2011.

"I am very happy that the European **Standardization** Bodies have met our request to develop within a short space of time the technical standards necessary for a common mobile phone charger based on the work done by industry," **European Commission** Vice President **Antonio Tajani** said. "Now it is time for industry to show its commitment to sell **mobile phones** for the new charger. The common charger will make life easier for consumers, reduce waste and benefit businesses. It is a true win-win situation."

The Commission expects the first common chargers and **mobile phones** compatible with the new standards to hit the European market in early 2011. "Users who want to change their **mobile phones** must usually acquire a new charger and dispose of the old one, even if it is in good condition," the Commission said.

Since June 2009, more than a dozen mobile phone makers – including Apple, Nokia, Research in Motion, Emblaze Mobile, Huawei Technologies, LGE, Motorola Mobility, NEC, Qualcomm, Samsung, Sony, Ericsson, TCT Mobile (ALCATEL), Texas Instruments, and Atmel – agreed to standardize on the micro **USB** plug in Europe.

It received the backing of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in October 2009. The **European Commission** then handed down a mandate in December 2009 requiring CENELEC and ETSI to deliver common charger standards. The groups have now delivered on that requirement.

While many manufacturers will have to make changes to live up to the (voluntary) agreement, it's arguably Apple where the change would be most notable. It remains to be seen if the company, which is heavily design-led, will indeed add the mini-USB charging socket to European iPhone, and in turn, if it will keep its familiar long and flat socket for data transfers.