

ANNUAL REPORT 2015



Small Business Standards is co-financed by the European Commission and the EFTA Member States



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Small Business Standards in brief

Small Business Standards (SBS) is a European non-profit association (aisbl) co-financed by the European Commission and EFTA Member States.

Our goal is to represent the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the standardisation process at European and international levels. Moreover, it aims to raise awareness amongst SMEs about the benefits brought by the use of standards and at encouraging them to get involved in the standardisation process.

Small Business Standards was set up to meet the European Union's commitment to make the standardisation system as inclusive, transparent and open as possible, as laid out in the European Regulation 1025/2012 on the European Standardisation System. Acknowledging shortcomings and challenges in the system, this fundamental piece of legislation recognises the necessary role of public authorities in supporting SMEs in the standards making process.

The association represents the interests of 14 million SMEs through 22 SME member organisations:





Message from the President



It is a great pleasure for me to present Small Business Standards annual report in its second year of activity.

The accomplishments throughout the past year show how SBS was able to pursue its endeavours to represent SME interests in the European Standardisation System.

European standards are essential in order to improve the quality and performance of products and services and contribute to the smooth running of the European Single Market.

As in 2014, we continued to work in close cooperation with the standardisation community at large. At European level, we cooperate with the

European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs), such as the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC) and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), the European Commission and other European stakeholders involved in standardisation.

In 2015, SBS intensified its activities. We also reached out to new audiences such as the European Parliament. This event marks a milestone for SBS as it constituted its first contacts with MEPs. Moreover, we established two sectoral approaches of great importance to SMEs, namely on construction and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Finally, we reinforced our presence in the technical committees of the European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs) by raising the number of appointed experts.

In our efforts to boost awareness about standardisation, we have increased the number of national and European seminars and organised training sessions related to the European Standardisation System. We have also successfully launched the SBS Construction Forum and the first edition of our annual conference on the theme of “Smart Standardisation for SMEs”, which attracted more than eighty participants and enabled a constructive exchange of views between the participants.

Furthermore, we produced reports, for instance on the implementation of the CEN-CENELEC Guide 17 “Guidance for writing standards taking into account micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) needs” and on norms price gaps at national levels.

At a political level, 2015 was a turning point for SBS. We and other organisations, were granted a reinforced right of appeal within CEN and CENELEC. Furthermore, EFTA has also signed a

Framework Partnership Agreement with us and is now contributing financially to our activities. These are just two examples of the growing importance of SBS as the voice of smaller companies in standardisation.

While we can be proud of our initial successes, the path towards the full integration of SME concerns in standardisation is still a long one. We will continue working towards this goal in the coming months and years.

This annual report is intended to help you broaden your knowledge of SBS and its activities throughout this past year, whereby we very much hope to extend and compound that interest through our activities in 2016.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gunilla Almgren', with a stylized, looped flourish at the end.

Gunilla ALMGREN
President
Small Business Standards



Representing the interests of SMEs

The association's predominant activity is to represent SME interests in the standardisation process at European level by appointing experts to the European and International Standardisation Organisations' Technical Committees (TCs) and Working Groups (WGs) – thus increasing SME participation – and to build up a European network of experts.

In 2015, there was a notable increase in the number of experts appointed. In total, SBS was represented 39 times at CEN level, twice at CENELEC level, five times at ETSI level and five times at ISO level. In total, 36 appointments were at the TC level, also enabling experts to participate in further WGs if they deemed this useful, three appointments were at Sub-Committee (SC) level and 12 appointments were exclusively at a WG-level.

SBS experts are submitted to strict selection criteria which were adopted in 2014 and applied for the first time in 2015 to both new applicants and existing experts.

The sectors encompass a wide variety of economic activities, ranging from tourism to ICT, from textile and footwear to cosmetics, and from pyrotechnic to machinery. However, in 2015, stronger focus has been set on sectoral standardisation policies in comparison to 2014. Indeed, bearing in mind that half of all European harmonised standards cover construction products and a big share also apply to the ICT sector, the establishment of sectoral approaches for these areas was considered necessary.



Sectoral brochures published in 2015

Improved representation of SMEs in the main sectoral advisory groups and TCs organised by the European Commission, the European Organisation of Technical Approvals (EOTA) and the European Committee for Standardisation (CEN), has facilitated the implementation of the Construction Products Regulation (CPR). Concerning the ICT sector, SBS aims to address issues

that are of strategic value for SMEs, such as interoperability and technical neutrality, as well as a new framework for Intellectual Property Rights in standards.

In 2015, SBS organised two meetings for its experts. Planned as training seminars, with external speakers, these meetings also enabled experts to meet each other and build important network structures with a view to exchanging expertise, experiences and strategies related to their work in representing SME interests in TCs and WGs. Moreover, these meetings were an opportunity to raise issues and discuss internal procedures and requirements such as the reporting requirements or the latest developments in the standardisation process.



Expert meeting held on 30 October 2015

In the framework of its newly set-up sectoral approach, SBS launched a Construction Forum which met on the 29th of October for the first time. Besides SBS experts in the construction sector, this forum attracted stakeholders involved in the standardisation of construction products and European Commission representatives from both DG GROW's Construction unit and Standardisation unit.

Furthermore, other achievements of our experts in 2015 include:

- contributing to the withdrawal of draft standards for respiratory protective devices – these would have replaced the equivalent European EN standard, causing an immense financial burden to SMEs and slowing down conformity assessment processes without adding any safety benefit when compared to the current EN standard in place;
- drawing attention to the need for a proper implementation of the Construction Products Regulation for cascading procedures which are regularly used by SMEs for windows and doors;
- calling for seismic assessment tests for wood connectors for the benefit of safety, the internal market and SME producer interests.



Communication and visibility activities

The voice of SMEs in the standardisation community is strengthened through regular events, trainings and communication and networking activities.

On 15 October, SBS organised its first conference entitled “Smart standardisation for SMEs”. The event gathered members and experts, high-level speakers from the European institutions, as well as standardisation stakeholders to discuss how the standardisation process impacts SMEs and how SMEs can benefit from it. The focus of this first edition was “From national to European standardisation in a global context”. The conference is to become a recurrent event to continually address standardisation issues from an SME perspective.



From left to right: Luc Hendrickx, UEAPME External Relations Director; Piet-Hein Daverveldt, CEN Finance Vice-President; Kerstin Jorna, European Commission Industrial Property, Innovation & Standards Director



SBS President Gunilla Almgren

A milestone occurred on the 3rd of December 2015 taking the form of a working breakfast in the European Parliament entitled “European standards as a chance for SMEs”, moderated by MEP Paul Rübzig, co-founder and Honorary President of SME Europe (EPP). At the event, SBS engaged for the first time with MEPs at policy level and informed them of standardisation for SMEs and its activities in the field. Additionally, SBS put forward the role of standards, the opportunities but also the challenges for SMEs. The breakfast was attended by high-level speakers and stakeholders representing both the public and the private sector.



MEP Paul Rübzig hosting the working breakfast organised in the European Parliament

Besides organising events, SBS pursued other communication activities to increase its visibility. As a result, SBS appeared in various newsletters, such as the weekly UEAPME Newsflash, the CEN-CENELEC SME Newsletters and The Construction Voice.

Furthermore, SBS increased its social media activities in 2015.



Raising SME awareness

Raising awareness amongst SMEs about the European Standardisation System and the association's role is another key mission of SBS. It entails the preparation of training seminars for SMEs and SME associations which are not necessarily familiar with the benefits of standardisation. SBS uses several tools for its awareness raising activities:



National seminars

In 2015, SBS successfully organised two national seminars in the first half of the year: one with the Austrian Chamber of Commerce in Vienna in April and one in the framework of the Latvian Council Presidency and with support of the Latvian Builders Association in Riga in June. In the second half of the year, a seminar was co-organised in France with the French Assembly of crafts Chambers. These seminars target a national audience and represent an excellent opportunity for SBS to interact directly with national stakeholders while raising awareness among these national stakeholders about standardisation.



UEAPME Secretary-General, Peter Faross, and EBC Secretary-General, Riccardo Viaggi



Cooperation with ESOs

SBS is closely cooperating with ESOs in order to reach out to SMEs, in particular through the framework of the SME Working Group (more details below). As part of SBS' awareness raising activities, we organised, together with CEN-CENELEC, a webinar in March 2015 on the topic of the CEN-CENELEC Guide 17 "Guidance for writing standards taking into account SME needs".



Consolidating an SME stance on standardisation

Part of SBS' mission is to position SMEs on an equal footing with multinationals within the standardisation process. Engaging and working closely with its member organisations is essential in order to gather and coordinate the views of smaller enterprises.

Through its network of 22 SME member organisations, SBS represents the voice of 12 million European SMEs sharing the vision of accessing a fairer, more sustainable and competitive business environment.

In 2015, SBS sustained its role as a key standardisation stakeholder. In particular, developments regarding the negotiations on the Vademecum on European Standardisation or the participation in the Ernst & Young survey on selected aspects which were to be analysed in the Independent Review on the European Standardisation System helped even more to not only consolidate SBS' stances but also its role as part of the standardisation community.

Furthermore, SBS regularly launched consultations on policy matters, draft mandates and other topics related to the assessment and analysis of standardisation regulations.

SBS published papers on the following standardisation topics, including:

- The assessment of norms price gap at national level;
- Future of Harmonised Standards under the CPR 305/2011/EU
- The European Standardisation System for SME
- Scope of the European Commission Mandate 112 and draft norm EN 14732:2014-08-15 (Structural Timber Elements)
- Renewal of EU type certificates for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)



Engaging with standardisation stakeholders

Under the EU Regulation 1025/2012, SBS is a recognised Annex III Organisation eligible for Union Financing in order to work towards an open and inclusive European Standardisation System. Consequently, we are strongly interconnected with all the other stakeholders involved in standards.



National Standardisation Organisations

A close working relationship with National Standardisation Organisations (NSOs) is important as they have an obligation to involve SMEs in the standardisation process already at national levels.

The national seminars organised over the year offered a remarkable opportunity to engage with representatives of the NSOs from those countries.



European Standardisation Organisations

SBS regularly liaised with ESOs. Together with CEN-CENELEC, we developed a tool for actions within the SME Working Group. In this Working Group, SBS led Task Force II which is in charge of 'Communication towards Trade Associations' and also took the lead in promoting *Guide 17* through various initiatives such as the jointly organised webinar with CEN-CENELEC in March.



European Commission and EU Member States

With the help of its members, SBS further built knowledge of the needs and expectations of the SME business community. These needs and expectations were consolidated and presented to European and national policy-makers in various ways, e.g. position papers or analyses.



EFTA

In May 2014, contacts were initiated with the EFTA Member States in order to request potential financial support, similar to that received by other Annex III organisations. At the end of 2015, SBS and EFTA reached an agreement and signed a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) and an Operating Grant.



Conclusion and outlook

As in 2015, SBS will continue its endeavours in 2016 to represent the interests of SMEs in the European Standardisation System. In order to do so, SBS will seek to increase the number of appointed experts to participate in the development of standards. We will continue to closely monitor the construction and ICT sectors and explore the possibility of engaging in new sectors.

Considering the low level of awareness amongst SMEs of the benefits brought by standards, SBS will pursue and intensify its awareness raising activities. In particular, the association will increase the number of national and European seminars, organise training sessions related to the European Standardisation System and work in close cooperation with ESOs. Due to the fast development of standards in the services sector, SBS will seek to organise an event relating to this issue. We will also contribute to the policy discussions on this topic.

Moreover, SBS will reinforce its activities related to all SME specific actions such as the identification of best practices and will prepare reports on the application of the CEN-CENELEC *Guide 17* or will call on NSOs to reach out to trade associations.

SBS will also continue to contribute to EU policy and regulatory work related to standardisation matters as well as to participate in TCs/WGs and will work with European Standardisation Organisations by interacting with stakeholders in ESO Managing Bodies, WGs, task forces and the Committee on Standards.

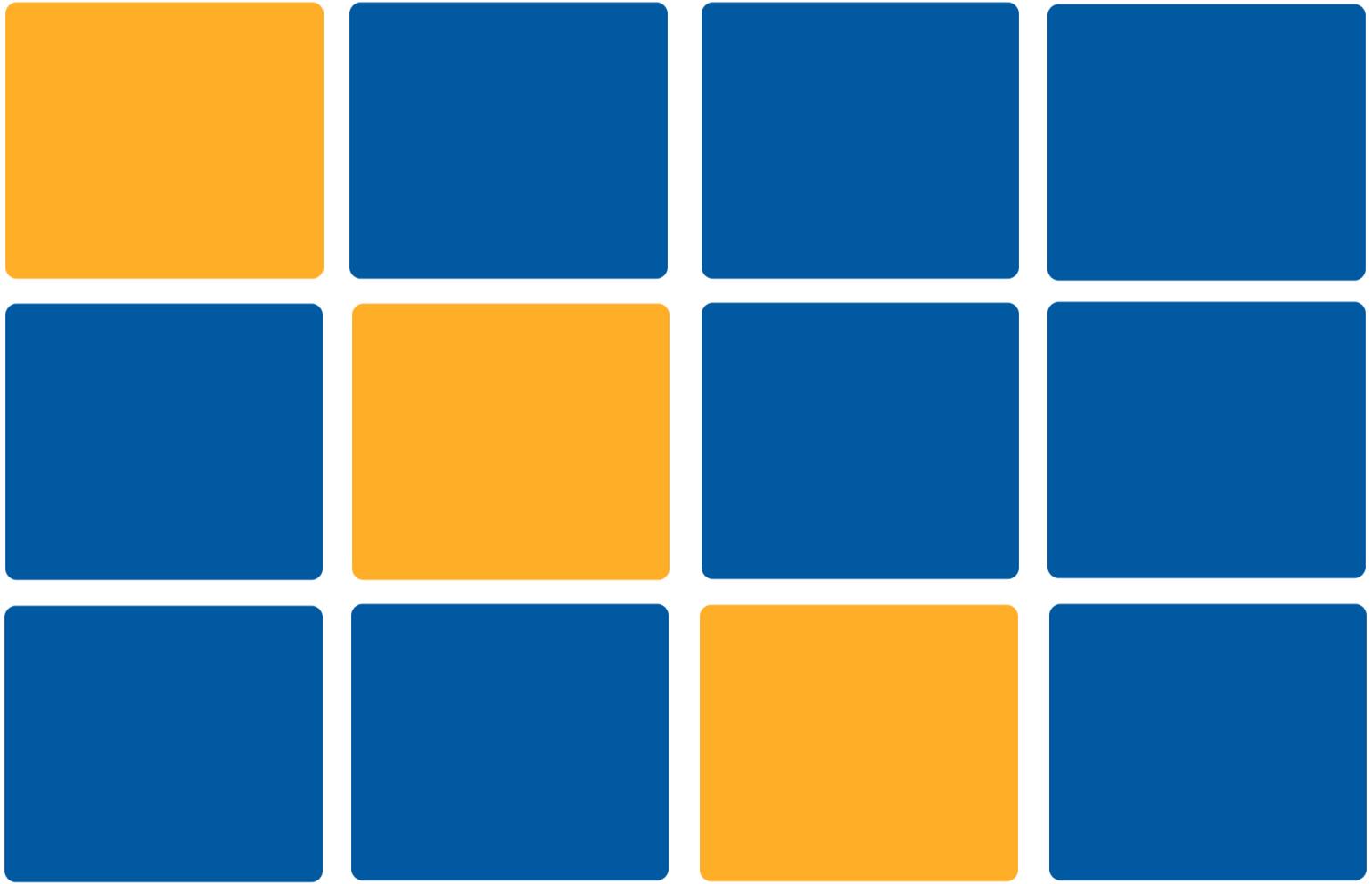


For more information

www.sbs-sme.eu

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Small Business Standards
Rue Jacques de Lalaing 4
B-1040 Brussels
+32 (0)2 285 07 27
info@sbs-sme.eu

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