



ANNUAL REPORT 2017



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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 the 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, SBS aims to raise awareness amongst SMEs about the benefits brought by the use of standards and to encourage them to get involved in the standardisation process.

SBS 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 EU Regulation 1025/2012 on the European Standardisation System. Acknowledging shortcomings and challenges in the system, this piece of legislation also recognises the necessary role of public authorities in supporting SMEs in the standards-making process.

Our association represents the interests of over 10 million SMEs through 20 SME organisations:





Message from the President



As President of Small Business Standards, I am pleased to present the Annual Report 2017. The past year was an exceptionally busy year for SBS and I am very satisfied with our deliverables.

The 2017 Work Programme was very ambitious, in particular considering that in addition to delivering all activities of our Work Programme, much of the first half of the year was devoted to the preparation and drafting of the reply to the European Commission's call for proposals. SBS won the call for proposals and is grateful for the continued trust that the European Commission puts in my organisation to continue the representation of SMEs in standardisation. In addition to the preparation of the reply to the call for proposals, SBS developed, in parallel, and subsequently adopted the Small Business Standards Strategy, which sets out the action plan for SMEs in standardisation for the period 2017-2021.

Furthermore, in 2017, SBS increasingly became a reference point inside as well as outside the Brussels arena, on both a political and technical level. On the political level, besides reinforcing its relations with standardisation stakeholders such as the national, European and international standardisation organisations, the secretariat engaged with the European Parliament. In this context, the secretariat would like to point out its own participation, as well as that of its member European Digital SME Alliance in the public hearing of the IMCO committee on the topic "European Standards for the 21st Century". Both SBS and DIGITAL SME were approached by MEP Marlene Mizzi to participate which bears witness to the increased recognition of SBS on the political Brussels arena.

More specifically with regard to the national standardisation bodies, SBS met with 14 of them in 11 countries during 2017 and constituted an important part of my organisation's relation building in the past year.

Another important achievement this year is that SBS' existing construction and ICT sector-specific approaches have been extended to a new sector. A third sector-specific approach

was established in the lift sector that benefitted from reinforced attention and activities during the year.

The success of our activities, ranging from our participation in the actual standards drafting to the development of strategic goals and relation building, would not have been possible without the investment of staff, members and experts. Therefore, I would like to thank you all and I count on your continued dedication for SMEs in standardisation in the coming years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gunilla Almgren'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'G' and 'A'.

Gunilla ALMGREN
President
Small Business Standards



Representing the interests of SMEs

SBS represents the SME perspective in standardisation on political as well as technical levels. The technical representation is ensured by experts who are appointed on an annual basis. These experts are appointed to represent SBS, based on their technical expertise and SME awareness, in a particular field. In this way, the experts are one of the core activities of SBS as they ensure SME representation in the actual standards development process in Technical Committees (TC) and Working Groups (WG) in CEN, CENELEC, ETSI, ISO and IEC.

SBS' General Assembly approved the appointment of 55 experts to be active on behalf of SBS in 2017, which is a 10% increase compared to the previous year. Of the 55 experts appointed, 45 were appointed to TCs/WGs at European level (CEN-CENELEC and ETSI) and 10 at international level (ISO and IEC). In addition to the paid experts, SBS also appointed eight experts to work on an unpaid basis.

During 2016, the experts covered approximately 145 TCs/SCs/WGs and were active in the following areas – cosmetics, lifts, ICT, transport systems and navigation, wood, furniture, construction, machinery, textiles and footwear, road vehicles, doors and windows, insulation materials, cultural property, electrical installations, occupational health and safety, welding, tourism, pyrotechnics. The appointment of new experts in 2017 allowed for a diversification of the sectors covered by SBS to cover, in addition to the previous sectors, ergonomics, natural stones, intelligent transport systems, safety of machinery, surgical clothing, drapes and medical face masks and management consultancy services as well as several construction related topics including glass in buildings, emission of dangerous substances from construction products, acoustic properties of building elements and of buildings, fire safety in buildings, design of steel structures.



The SBS experts' meetings were held in Brussels on 15 February and 11 October

Since 2016, SBS undertakes its two-fold sectoral approach by reinforcing cooperation with construction and ICT organisations. This year also marks the extension of SBS' sectoral approach to the lift sector.

The second SBS Construction Forum was held in Brussels on 11 October, following the second annual SBS experts' meeting, and focused on the review of the Construction Products Regulation. The SBS Forum on ICT Standards took place on 31 March in Cluj (Romania) with e-invoicing and e-identification at the centre of the discussions. Building on the success of the first two sectors, an SBS Lift Forum was established on 13 December with the objective of discussing the "Impact on SMEs of the latest standardisation measures for lifts".



Visibility and information

SBS' ability to achieve its set objectives which is to represent the interests of SMEs in the standardisation process at European level, to raise the awareness of SMEs for standardisation and motivate SMEs to become involved in the standardisation process, is directly related to its ability to communicate effectively and thus engage with its different audiences.

While in 2016, SBS was still in the process of developing its identity, 2017 was a year of full implementation.

SBS' annual conference, which took place on 10 October 2017 in the prestigious Solvay Library in Brussels, was a great achievement as it allowed for maximum visibility and impact. This year, the conference was dedicated to a debate around the EU Regulation 1025/2012 on European standardisation, adopted five years ago. It emerged that most SMEs believe this legislation has been a 'door opener' – improving their ability to participate in standardisation.

Participants from the European standardisation community presented and exchanged their views on the initiatives that have been put in place, or are being envisaged, at national and European levels, to ensure a level playing field between the standards-makers and users' respective needs.

For the first time, the panel discussions included real life stories of SME owners talking about their experience using standards. This form of event brought consistency to SBS' messages and made its position even clearer.



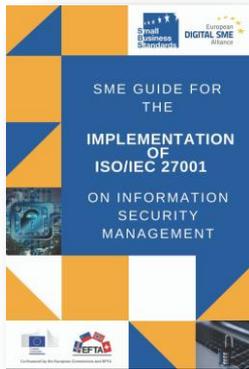


SBS annual conference "European Standardisation Regulation - 5 years on. What has changed for SMEs?" in the Solvay Library

In addition, new channels of communication were explored to reach out to different audiences. For example, SBS was involved in some audio-visual projects. One project was undertaken on the occasion of the International Women's Day for which CEN-CENELEC published an interview with Gunilla Almgren, SBS' President. SBS also contributed to a video produced by CEN-CENELEC promoting SMEs in standardisation. In addition, SBS produced a video composed of the testimonials of the annual conference speakers. This short video, featuring parts of the entrepreneurs' speeches, intended to show some of the benefits of standards for SMEs and the reasons of three CEOs to participate in the standards making process.

Furthermore, substantial efforts were made to reduce the newsletter's articles' technical language in order to satisfy an audience that does not specifically have knowledge about standards.

Other publications included press releases of which six have been issued in both French and English and sectoral publications, such as the SME guide for the implementation of ISO/IEC 27001 on information security management and a guide on e-Competence Framework.



The SME guide for the implementation of ISO/IEC 27001 on information security management and a guide on e-Competence Framework

Lastly, SBS significantly gained confidence among the Twitter audience as it engaged more actively than ever before, resulting in an impressive increase in the number of followers.





Raising SME awareness

Another core mission of SBS is to raise awareness amongst SMEs about standardisation. This activity aims to inform and train SMEs, either directly or through their trade associations, about the standardisation system and about the benefits SMEs can gain from using standards.

The national seminars are organised in collaboration with a trade association at national level as well as the national standardisation organisation(s) (NSOs) of the country. This activity is therefore one of the most important initiatives to engage with both types of stakeholders.



National seminars

This year, SBS organised three national seminars. The aim of the seminars is to raise awareness about standards and to inform and train SMEs about the advantages of standards, as well as to foster exchange of views between European and national representatives and stakeholders of the standardisation system.

The first national seminar was organised with UEAPME's Belgian member organisation UNIZO in the unique environment of the Living Tomorrow building in Vilvoorde (Brussels' outskirts). The second one, organised with the support of EVEA, the Estonian SME association, was held under the Estonian EU Presidency and in the framework of the European SME Week in Tallinn (Estonia). The third seminar was held in Athens and was co-organised with GSEVEE, the Greek member of UEAPME.



SBS Director Christel Davidson at a seminar organised in Tallinn on 21 November and European Commission Standards for Growth Deputy Head of Unit Hein Bollens at a seminar in Vilvoorde on 14 November



Training sessions for SMEs and associations

Training for SMEs is one of SBS' most essential tools to encourage SMEs to get involved in the European Standardisation System. This year, three sessions were organised mainly aimed at permanent staff in SME associations, ensuring that information on standardisation is understood and relayed to companies.

The first training session intitled "Training on Intellectual Property Rights-based standardisation" was organised in Brussels to inform and raise awareness about the high strategic importance of Intellectual Property Rights for the European economy.



SBS IPR-based standardisation training on 29 June in Brussels

Another training session was intended to understand "How SMEs can reap the benefits of standardisation in the era of digitisation". This session was specially targeting SBS members.

In collaboration with its Italian member CNA (National Confederation of Small Business and Craft firms), a first pilot experience of the train-the-trainer programme was held in Milan (Italy). This programme aimed at raising awareness on the importance of a direct SME participation in the standardisation process, providing training on drafting standards, on standardisation rules and the standards drafting participation mechanisms.



Engaging with standardisation stakeholders

In 2017, SBS continued to engage with all the relevant stakeholders at European level.

For example, SBS continued to be active with regards to the Joint Initiative on Standardisation which represents a unique opportunity for SBS to help shape the future of standardisation and to ensure that the voice of SMEs is heard.

At the beginning of the year, SBS also collaborated with the European Parliament. SBS was invited to the Public hearing on European Standards for the 21st Century initiated through MEP Marlene Mizzi's report on standardisation.

On 3 July, an information session was organised for European Commission officials. The aim of the session was to increase the knowledge about SME specific issues in standards development amongst this audience who may have an interest in this topic or that may encounter standardisation and/or SME related issues in their daily work.

Regulation (EU) 1025/2012 calls on National Standardisation Bodies (NSBs) to exchange good practices among NSOs and to raise their awareness about the value of further including SMEs in standardisation.

To that end, SBS initiated in 2017, bilateral meetings with NSBs. SBS met 14 NSOs in 11 . SBS namely met (chronologic order of the meetings) the NSB of Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Greece and Finland.

Furthermore, SBS organised the second edition of its twinning event in Bulgaria (Sofia). The event was co-organised with ICT Cluster and focused primarily on ICT related issues and AFNOR was invited to share its good practices as regards reaching out and working with SMEs and SME representatives.



Looking ahead

It has been a successful year for SBS from technical, political and strategic perspectives.

The number of sectors covered by technical experts has increased but has also been subject to a diversification. SBS from now on covers new sectors such as ergonomics and natural stones.

From a political viewpoint, the invitation by MEP Marlene Mizzi to the public hearing on standardisation showcased that SBS is the go-to organisation in the Brussels arena for general SME issues in standardisation.

Strategically, I am confident that the long-term strategy adopted will contribute to making SBS live to its full potential. In the coming year I look forward to work with staff, members and experts to continue along this successful path.



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