

ANNUAL REPORT 2016



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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, 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 fundamental 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 21 SME member organisations:





Message from the President



As President of Small Business Standards, I am proud to present our 2016 Annual Report.

For SBS, 2016 has been a very eventful year, with many successes. Besides increasing the number of experts participating in the standardisation process at European and international levels, we have expanded the number of events and training sessions that we organise. In 2016 we also launched our new capacity-building programme and ICT Forum, both of which have proved to be major successes.

Politically speaking, 2016 also turned out to be an important year for SBS, thanks to the signing of the Joint Initiative on Standardisation. As President of SBS, I strongly believe in actions which aim at encouraging stakeholders to work together towards a common objective – namely bringing standardisation to the next level.

This annual report describes what we have achieved and how we have managed our resources to improve the standardisation system for SMEs across Europe. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our members for their continuous support and commitment to SBS.

Unfortunately, 2016 was also marked by a very sad event which affected us all, the passing away of Lorenzo Accardo. Lorenzo was one of the driving forces behind the creation of SBS. Despite his worsening illness, he did not give up and continued to work until the end. We will remember him as a great, humble and caring colleague, someone who was always optimistic and had a passion for life.

Gunilla ALMGREN
President
Small Business Standards



Representing the interests of SMEs

SMEs represent over 99% of all European companies and are potentially the greatest users of standards. Yet they do not sufficiently participate in the standardisation process. One of SBS' activities is therefore to ensure the presence of SME representatives in the standardisation process at European and international levels, with experts participating in Technical Committees (TC), Working Groups (WG), etc.

SBS experts contribute to the development of standards. They also ensure that SME interests and needs are taken into account during this process and in the end result (standards).

Out of the 50 experts appointed in December 2015, 40 were appointed to TCs/WGs at European level and 10 at international level. In addition to the paid experts, SBS appointed seven experts to work on an unpaid basis.

SBS experts gathered in Brussels on two occasions during the year, in April and October 2016.



SBS experts' meetings were held in Brussels on 13 April and 18 October 2016

The second meeting was an opportunity for some of our experts to meet for the first time with an MEP (Mr Nicola Danti) and to visit the European Parliament.

In 2016, SBS pursued its two-fold sectoral approach by reinforcing cooperation with construction and ICT organisations. The second SBS Construction Forum was held on 14 April.

Building on the success of the SBS Construction Forum, after its second meeting, SBS launched a similar Forum for ICT on 9 December in Cologne (Germany). SBS Fora are European platforms for discussion and sharing of information about ongoing standards activities that are relevant to SMEs. The ICT Forum will focus in particular on digitisation of SMEs, and it targets SMEs providing ICT services as well as SME users of these services.



Communication and visibility activities

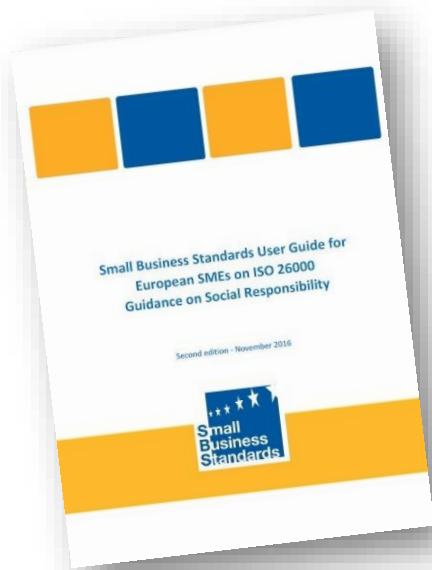
The arrival of Tessa Delville, our Communication and Event Officer, in early 2016 opened a new and promising era for SBS communication activities.

New tools were developed over the year to boost our contact and communication with SBS audiences. The association's identity was also revamped and launched at the SBS Annual Conference on 19 October 2016. This new identity is visible on all our communication material and notably on our newsletter, which underwent a major update.

In 2016, SBS also reinforced its visibility activities. Together with better promotion of events, this allowed for a greater dissemination of our key messages and engagement with existing as well as new stakeholders.

One notable event was the second edition of the SBS Annual Conference, which drew over 100 participants. Held in October 2016 in Brussels, it focused on the theme 'Reinforcing the cooperation within the standardisation community'. With SMEs at the centre of the discussions, speakers throughout the day addressed the importance of standards in boosting competitiveness for SMEs, the value of being involved in the standardisation process, and the shift from European to international standardisation. Discussions also included an assessment of the EU Standards Regulation and the voluntary nature of standards.





The revised 'Small Business Standards User Guide for European SMEs on ISO 26000: Guidance on Social Responsibility'

In 2016, SBS also produced more publications than ever before. In addition to press releases and eight newsletters in English, French, German and Italian, which were taken up by the national and European press, SBS delivered an updated version of the User Guide for SMEs on ISO 26000 (social responsibility of organisations).

SBS also became more active on social media, resulting in an increase in the number of visitors to our website and our Twitter followers.



Raising SME awareness

Another core mission of SBS is raising awareness amongst SMEs about the European Standardisation System and its role. This activity aims to inform and train SMEs, either directly or through their trade associations, about standardisation and about the benefits they can gain from using standards.



National seminars

In 2016, SBS successfully organised five national seminars, four of which took place in countries never targeted before by SBS. These seminars allow for direct contact and the exchange of experience between national SMEs, their representatives, NSOs, experts involved in the standardisation process as well as companies that have implemented standards.

The first national seminar took place in Sofia in March, co-organised by SBS and ICT Cluster Bulgaria. The second, organised by SBS with the support of SNV, one of the two Swiss national standardisation body, was organised in Zürich in May. The third seminar was held in Madrid in September and was co-organised with EFESME, the European Federation for Elevator Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. The fourth national seminar took place in Rome in September and was co-organised with CNA, Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato e della Piccola e Media Impresa, Confartigianato Imprese and Unioncamere. The fifth and last seminar took place in Dublin in December. It was organised with ISME, the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association.



SBS Director Christel Davidson speaking at a seminar organised in Dublin on 6 December 2016



Training sessions for SMEs and associations in standardisation

Training for SMEs is an essential SBS tool, as it encourages them to get involved in the standardisation process. SBS therefore organised three training sessions in 2016. Although open to all, the sessions were mainly aimed at permanent staff in SME associations, ensuring that information on standardisation is understood and relayed to companies.

The first training session specifically targeted members of SBS' General Assembly. It took place in June 2016, ahead of the SBS GA, and aimed to update members on all the latest developments in the field of standardisation.

The second session featured general training on standards. It took place in November 2016 and was open to both members and non-members. The goal was to include SBS members and SMEs not directly involved in standardisation.



In December 2016, SBS also organised a roundtable discussion on services ('Services Standards: an opportunity for businesses?'). Representatives of various sectors discussed and exchanged views on the standardisation of services in their respective sector.





Consolidating an SME stance on standardisation

Since the adoption of Regulation (EU) 1205/2012, standardisation has been gaining political momentum. In June 2016, the European Commission published various documents of relevance to our field, including a very important guidance document on standardisation in services. This sets out measures that will help to prioritise and encourage the development of European service standards.

One important milestone was the signing of the Joint Initiative on Standardisation (JIS), which took place in Amsterdam on 13 June 2016. The JIS sets out a vision for the future of European standardisation shared by all signatories and is in line with the European Commission's priorities and policy objectives. It sets out some 15 actions and pilot projects, one of which focuses on SMEs and how to improve their representation in the international standardisation process. SBS is leading this action. SBS is also a member of the JIS steering group, which was set up to monitor its developments.

Another important development in 2016, one of particular importance to construction SMEs, was the ruling of the European Court of Justice in the James Elliot Construction case (Ireland). This ruling confirmed that Harmonised Standards in the field of construction are implicitly connected to an EU Directive or Regulation.

SBS also adopted various position papers and responded to various consultations on the following standardisation topics:

- Services standardisation
- Evaluation of the Lifts Directive. Data collection interview guide: Case studies
- Machinery Directive



Engaging with standardisation stakeholders

In 2016, SBS continued to reinforce its links with stakeholders involved in standardisation and to reach out to others.



Annex III organisations

One of the principles set out in Regulation (EU) 1025/2012 is inclusiveness or how to ensure that under-represented stakeholders in standardisation are better represented at national and European level. These under-represented stakeholders are known as ‘Annex III organisations’ and are SMEs and societal stakeholders, i.e. consumers, trade unions and environmental organisations.

In 2016, SBS worked with the other Annex III organisations on a series of specific topics. Together we were successful in inserting a chapter on inclusiveness in the ETSI Long-Term Strategy (2016-2021).

Moreover, all of the Annex III organisations participated in the panel discussion on the Assessment of the Standards Regulation by Annex III organisations and ESO, during the SBS annual event held in October 2016.



National Standardisation Organisations

Regulation (EU) 1025/2012 calls on national standardisation organisations to encourage and facilitate the access of SMEs to standards and standards development processes, so that they can participate more in the standardisation system.

To that end, SBS organised its first twinning exercise in Berlin in October 2016 with the collaboration of DIN, the German National Standardisation Organisation, and ÚNMZ, the Czech National Standardisation Organisation. The goal was to exchange good practices among NSOs and to raise their awareness about the value of further including SMEs in standardisation.



European Standardisation Organisations

In 2016, compared to the previous year, SBS increased the number of experts in ESOs from 37 paid experts to 40. In standardisation bodies at the international level, this number increased from five paid experts to 10.

Over the year, SBS also worked more closely with CEN-CENELEC on a political level. Two meetings were organised at the highest level. The first meeting was in February 2016, between SBS' President and the Presidents of CEN-CENELEC, and the second included the President of CENELEC and SBS' Board. The aim of the meetings was to boost dialogue between the organisations and to explore ways to strengthen the partnership between CEN, CENELEC and SBS. This led for instance to the publication in March 2016 of a [joint press release](#) on the uptake by ISO and IEC of Guide 17, on how to write SME-friendly standards.

SBS is a member of ETSI and is represented on its Board. In this capacity, SBS achieved three major successes. The first was the uptake of an SBS proposal to include a chapter on inclusiveness in the ETSI Long-Term Strategy. The second was the blocking of a proposal from some stakeholders to modify ETSI's internal rules of procedure regarding dispute resolution between ETSI members: this proposed modification would have been very detrimental for smaller companies. The third success was the appointment of Vladimir Poulkov – who was supported by DIGITAL SME and SBS – as ETSI General Assembly vice-chair in December 2016.

At international level, SBS also succeeded in attracting ISO and IEC, and their respective representatives, to participate in the SBS second experts meeting.



European institutions

In 2016, SBS continued its efforts to work more closely with the European institutions.

SBS was especially active in the discussions that led to the signing of the Joint Initiative on Standardisation. The JIS discussions were a unique opportunity for SBS to help shape the future of standardisation and to ensure the voice of SMEs was heard.

In 2016, SBS continued to collaborate well with the European Parliament. Besides a bilateral meeting between SBS experts and MEP Nicola Danti, we also engaged with the rapporteur (MEP Marlene Mizzi) on the own-initiative report on standardisation.

SBS also started working with the European Economic and Social Committee on the report by Patrick Liébus on the 2017 Annual Union Work Programme, and in particular the call for more inclusiveness.



EFTA

SBS continued to collaborate well with the EFTA Secretariat in Brussels. Brit Helle, EFTA Director Goods Division, addressed the SBS General Assembly on 1 December 2016.



Looking ahead

2016 was a very successful year for SBS and for SMEs involved in standardisation. Despite the many challenges that lie ahead, we are confident that 2017 will also be a good year.

We intend to continue with many of our current activities, such as the awareness-raising seminars, the capacity-building events and training sessions. The number of SBS experts participating in the standardisation process will also increase.

Existing activities will be extended to new sectors. For instance, we are planning the establishment of a third sector-specific approach, for the lift sector. This will follow the existing construction and ICT sector-specific approaches.

New activities are also foreseen. Firstly, SBS will work more closely with the National Standardisation Organisations and organise high-level bilateral meetings with a view to building relations at the national level. Another new activity is a train-the-trainer programme to create a pool of 'trainers' who can disseminate information about standardisation to other people.

All these activities should ensure a stronger representation of SMEs in the standardisation process in 2017 and beyond. This, of course, is the very purpose of SBS.

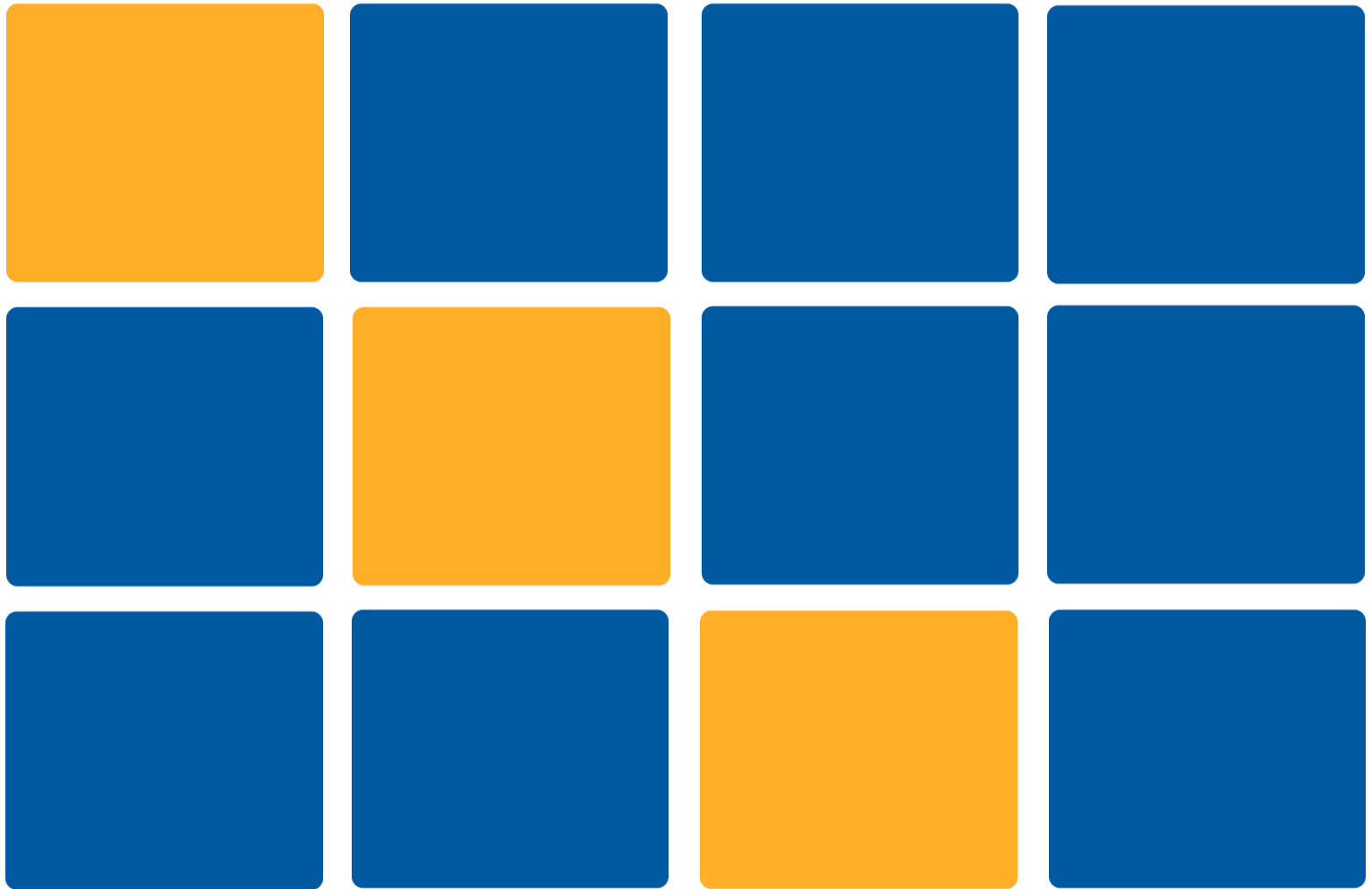


For more information

www.sbs-sme.eu

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