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Brussels, 10 September 2021

Artificial Intelligence Act: A harmonised approach to support SMEs, encourage SME participation in standardisation and promote innovation

Brussels, 10 September 2021 – Small Business Standards (SBS), the association representing European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in standardisation, welcomes the European Commission's initiative to drive forward Artificial Intelligence (AI) as one of the main pillars for digital transformation. While SBS generally welcomes a harmonised approach to regulating AI in the EU and recognises the importance of ethical AI for both for EU citizens and businesses, it believes that the proposal, in its current form, is likely to hamper innovation and overburden SMEs.

Late August, SBS published a position paper detailing its response to the European Commission's initiative on [Artificial intelligence – ethical and legal requirements](#) about the impact of the AI Act on SMEs, especially in terms of costs, technical issues, quality assurance and certification, and the impact on innovation.

SBS identifies possible solutions to the weaknesses shown in the present proposal of the Commission. SMEs forming the backbone of Europe's economy, SBS believes that standards should be written with the active participation of smaller businesses and that the "one-size-fits-all" approach, often adopted by research organisations, large companies, and legal and ethical experts, should be avoided. Moreover, the standards referred to in order to comply with the regulation should be made available free of charge. SBS calls on the European Commission to reconsider the high costs and complexity of standardisation and certification schemes that SMEs would encounter under the current proposal, which is likely to push SMEs out of the market.

The inability of SMEs to cope with the required large sums of investment in AI would result in SMEs' inability to compete in a highly competitive market leaving Europe behind in technology development and losing its position in the global competition. This would be inconsistent with the purpose of the Act which is to support a thriving and innovative AI ecosystem in Europe.

[Read the full position paper](#) here.

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EDITORS' NOTES: Small Business Standards (SBS) is the association representing European SMEs in standardisation. SBS is co-financed by the European Commission and EFTA. It's 21 members are national and European sectoral and inter-professional associations representing SMEs in 32 European countries.

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