



HIGH-LEVEL FORUM WORKSHOP

Driving inclusiveness in standardisation: how to strengthen national participation?



5 June 2024



9:30 – 16:30



Brussels & online

[HLF Workstream 3 – NSBs Peer Review and national inclusiveness](#)

Questionnaires and interviews report – Main findings

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Introduction and Methodology

Report – Introduction and Methodology

- Report produced under workstream 3 on “NSB peer-review and National Inclusiveness”, co-led by SBS (Small Business Standards) and CEN-CENELEC. The workstream includes 21 HLF member organisations.
- 3 Questionnaires launched in October 2023, open for 10 weeks until end of 2023. Questionnaires addressed at:
 - National stakeholders
 - NSBs
 - Member States
- A total almost 220 valid replies were received to the questionnaires (169 Stakeholders, 35 NSBs, 14 MSs).
- Findings of the questionnaires integrated by 20 follow-up interviews carried out in March/April 2024 with 4 Member States, 6 NSBs, 10 Stakeholder groups’ representatives.
- The report is articulated in three main areas:
 - Conditions and measures for access of stakeholders to the standardisation process
 - Conditions and measures for the effective participation of stakeholders already involved in the standardisation process
 - Existing best practices
- The full report will be shared for comments among the Workstream 3 members and published in the coming weeks.

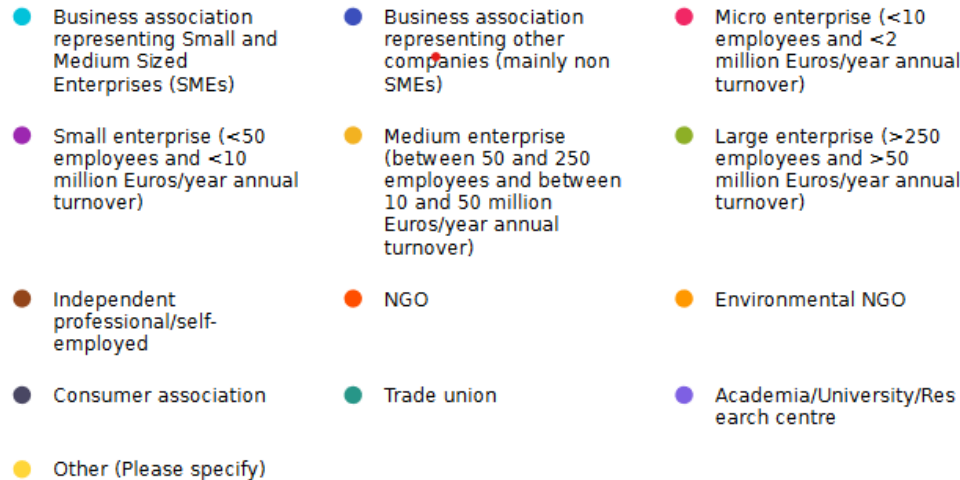
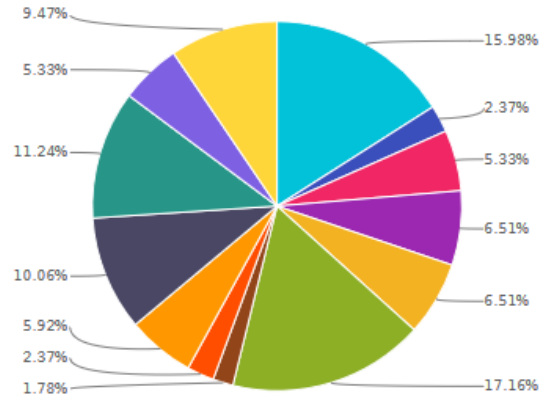
Conditions and measures for stakeholder access

Demographics of Stakeholder respondents

Q2

1. Which kind of stakeholder category do you represent?

Answered: 169 Skipped: 0



Categories of stakeholder respondents

- **35%** - SMEs and SME associations
- **20%** - Large enterprises and their associations
- **11%** - Trade unions
- **10%** - Consumer associations
- **8,5%** - NGOs (environmental and other)
- **5%** - Academia
- **10%** - Other

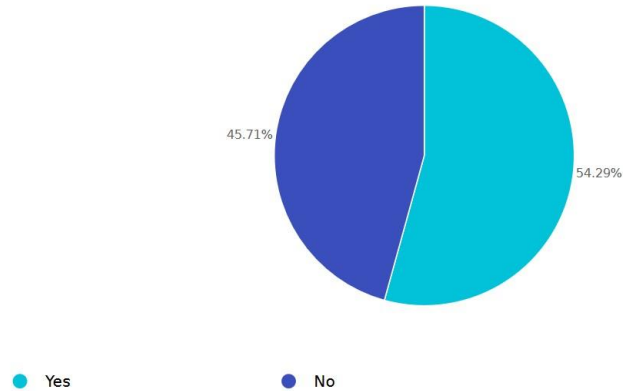
Importance of main point of contact for underrepresented stakeholders within the NSB:

- Only **54% of NSBs** have indicated that they have a dedicated contact person to liaise with underrepresented stakeholders

Points of contact at NSB and MS level

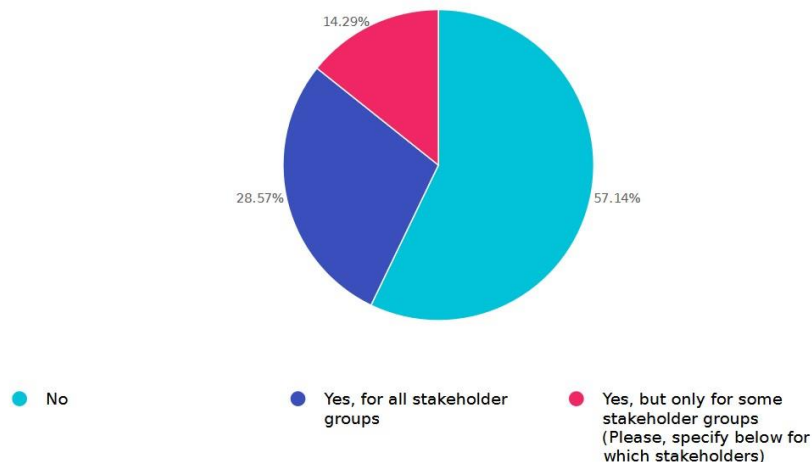
1. Do you have a specific service/department or contact person to liaise with SMEs and other underrepresented stakeholders (consumers, environmental stakeholders, trade unions) with regard to their participation in standardisation work within your National Standardisation Body (NSB)?

Answered: 35 Skipped: 0



1. Do you have a specific office or contact person in place to liaise with SMEs, societal stakeholders (e.g. consumers, environmental stakeholders, trade unions) and/or academia with regards to their participation in national standardisation?

Answered: 14 Skipped: 0



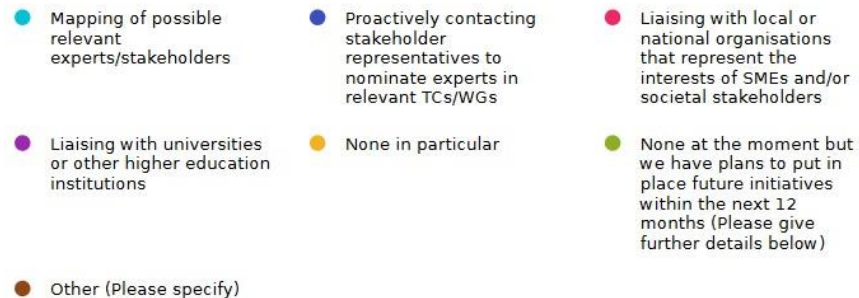
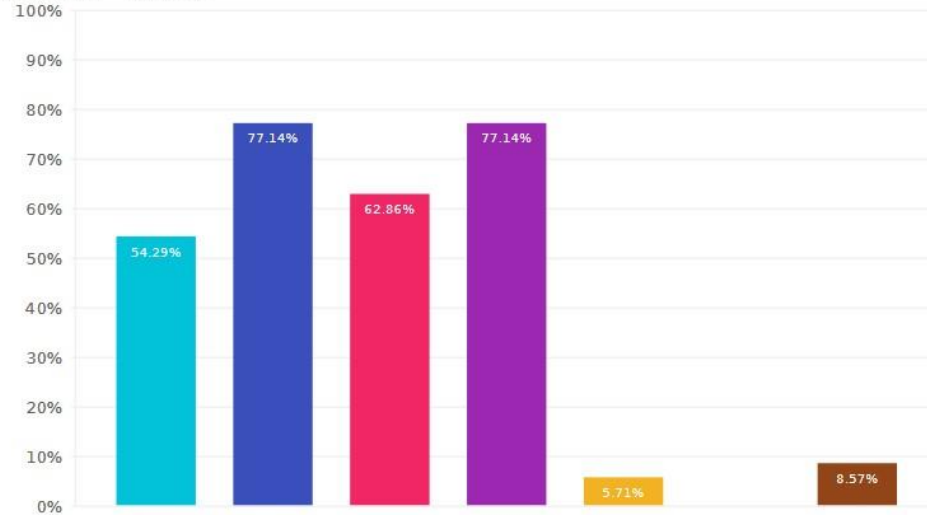
Importance of main point of contact for underrepresented stakeholders within the NSB and at Member States level:

- **54% of NSBs** have indicated that they have a dedicated contact person to liaise with underrepresented stakeholders (Above)
- **71% of Member States** respondents have a contact point at least for some categories of stakeholders (below). In the cases where only some, categories have a counterpart, this is in most cases for consumers.

Measures implemented by NSBs

4. Which measures are in place to identify and approach possible interested stakeholders and experts and raise their awareness on relevant standardisation developments?
(multiple answers possible)

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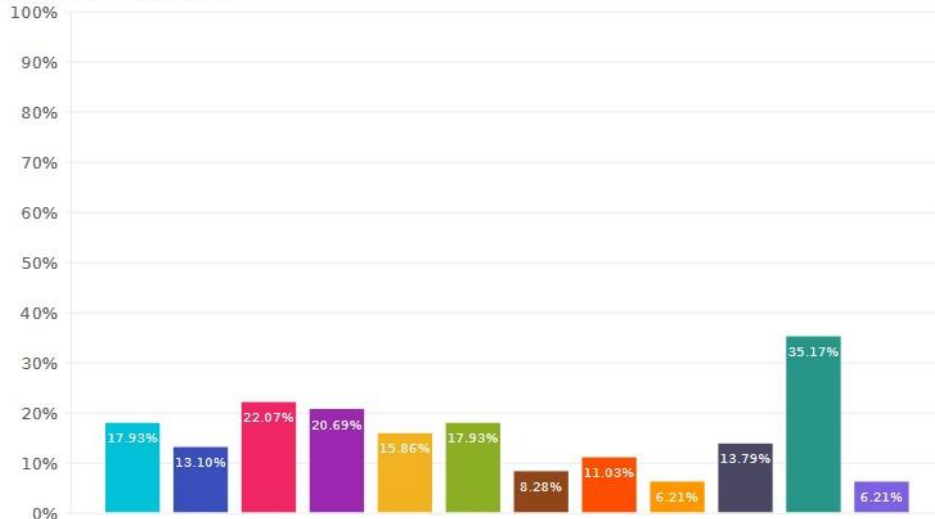
NSB signal a high level of interaction and attempts to involve stakeholders, raise awareness and recruit new experts to participate in technical work:

- 77% - Contacting stakeholder representatives already involved, to further disseminate information
- 77% - Liaison with universities
- 63% - Liaison with national associations representing stakeholders
- 54% - Wider mapping of relevant experts/stakeholders

Stakeholder awareness of NSBs measures

6. Are you aware of any specific efforts made by National Standardisation Body/Bodies to promote the access and participation of representatives of your stakeholder group to the standardisation work? (multiple answers possible)

Answered: 145 Skipped: 16



- Dedicated section on the website of the National Standardisation Body/Bodies
- Specific training for SMEs and/or other stakeholder groups
- Free access or reduced fees to participate in Technical Committees (TCs) and working groups (WGs)
- Special rates for purchasing standards
- Subscription/Bundle purchase of standards
- Free access to draft standards
- Free access to mandatory and harmonised standards
- Abstracts of standards freely available on the standardisation body website
- Translation of drafts standards into the national language(s)
- Translation of final standards into the national language(s)
- No
- Other (Please specify)

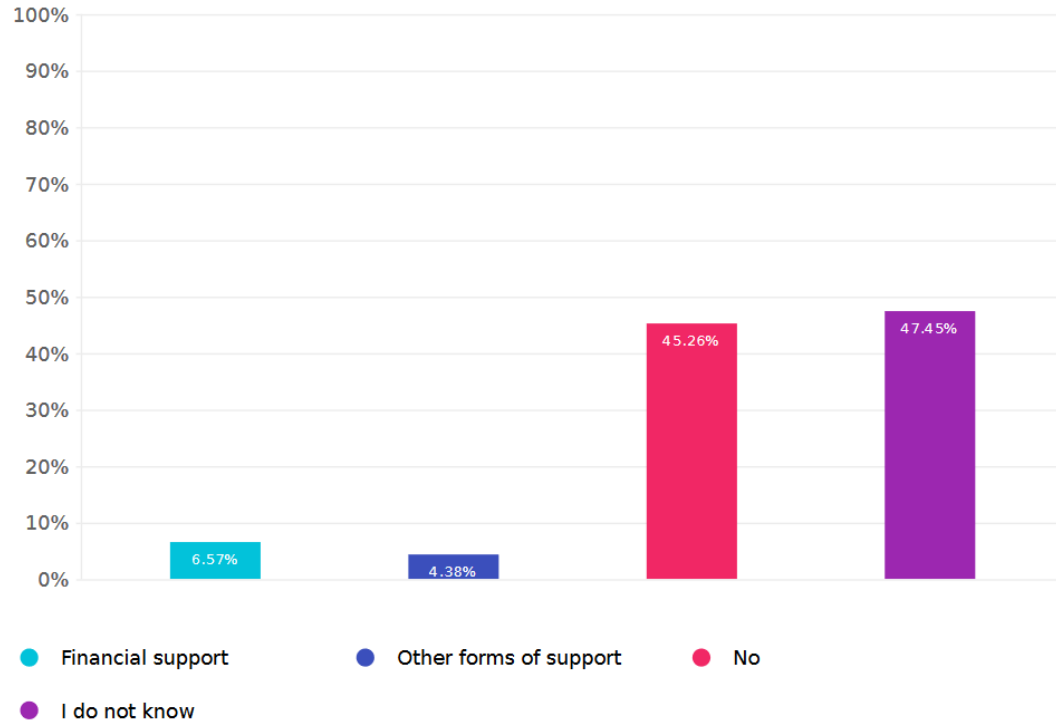
Similar question as above, addressed this at stakeholders, paints a very different picture, highlighting a stark disconnect and awareness gap:

- Scattergun knowledge of different measures that might be in place, no prevalent reply
- A clear plurality (35% of respondents) is not aware of any specific measures implemented by NSBs

Stakeholder awareness of MSs measures

9. Does your national / regional government offer financial or other support to foster the participation of companies, SMEs or stakeholder organisations representing SMEs, environmental interests, consumers, trade unions) in the standardisation process at national / European / International level? (*multiple answers possible*)

Answered: 137 Skipped: 24



The awareness gap among stakeholders is even more stark when considering their knowledge of measures for access and participation taken by Member States:

- 47% unaware/do not know of any specific measures by Member States in this sense
- 45% respond that there are no such measures in place

Recap of main findings on access

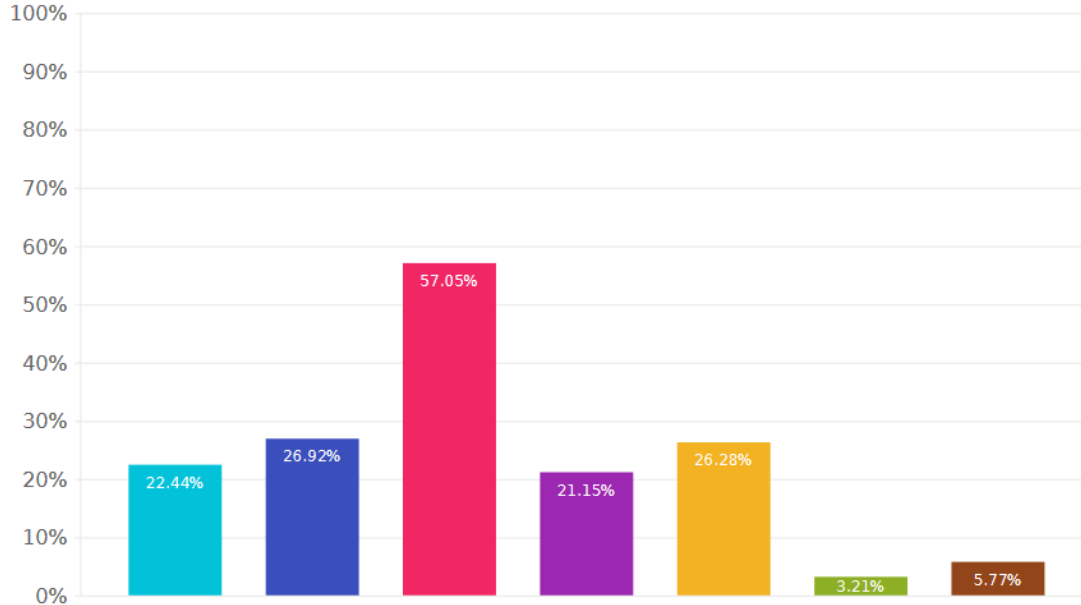
- Importance for stakeholders of a clear and defined point of contact within NSB and government authorities
- Particular importance, highlighted both by stakeholders and a number of NSBs, of setting up stakeholder groups within NSBs to provide consistent feedback and interaction with stakeholder representatives
- Stark awareness gap between the measures implemented by NSBs and government authorities and their knowledge by SMEs
- Generally adequate level of contact among Member States and NSBs (77% participate in meetings of NSB governing structures/advisory bodies; 70% occasional coordination meetings; 53% structure coordination meetings)

Measures for effective participation

Stakeholder participation in technical work

4. Are you or a representative of your organisation involved in the following activities of the National Standardisation Body/Bodies? (*multiple answers possible*)

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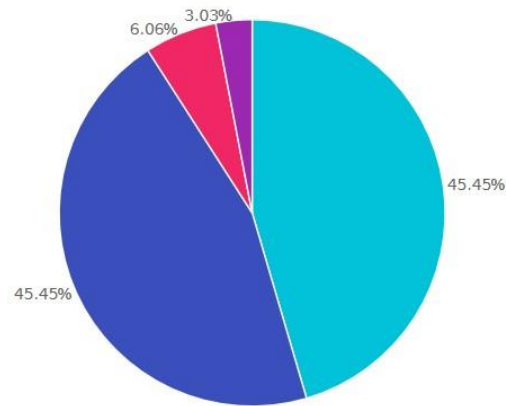
- Participation in management committees of the National Standardisation Body/Bodies
- Specific stakeholder coordination groups or advisory bodies aimed at interacting with your stakeholder category
- Participation in Technical Committees
- Participation in trainings or other outreach activities
- We are not involved in any of the above
- I do not know
- Other (Please specify)

- Encouraging to see only a minority of respondents (26%) do not directly engage or participate in standardisation activities at all
- 45% participates directly through a staff member
- 29% Involvement through membership in association
- 29% Involvement through an expert linked to the organisation
- The reliance on in-house staff for participation in standardisation can lead to time constraints and other obstacles to effective participation
- Reliance on sectoral or stakeholder associations and importance of their role as multipliers.

NSBs information on stakeholder participation

8. Is there updated information on the current representation of different stakeholder groups (micro, small and large companies, environmental actors, consumers, trade unions, governmental agencies, academia...) in the standardisation work of the NSB?

Answered: 33 Skipped: 2



● Yes, We have detailed, up to date information regarding the representation of different groups

● Yes, We have some data regarding the representation of different groups

● No

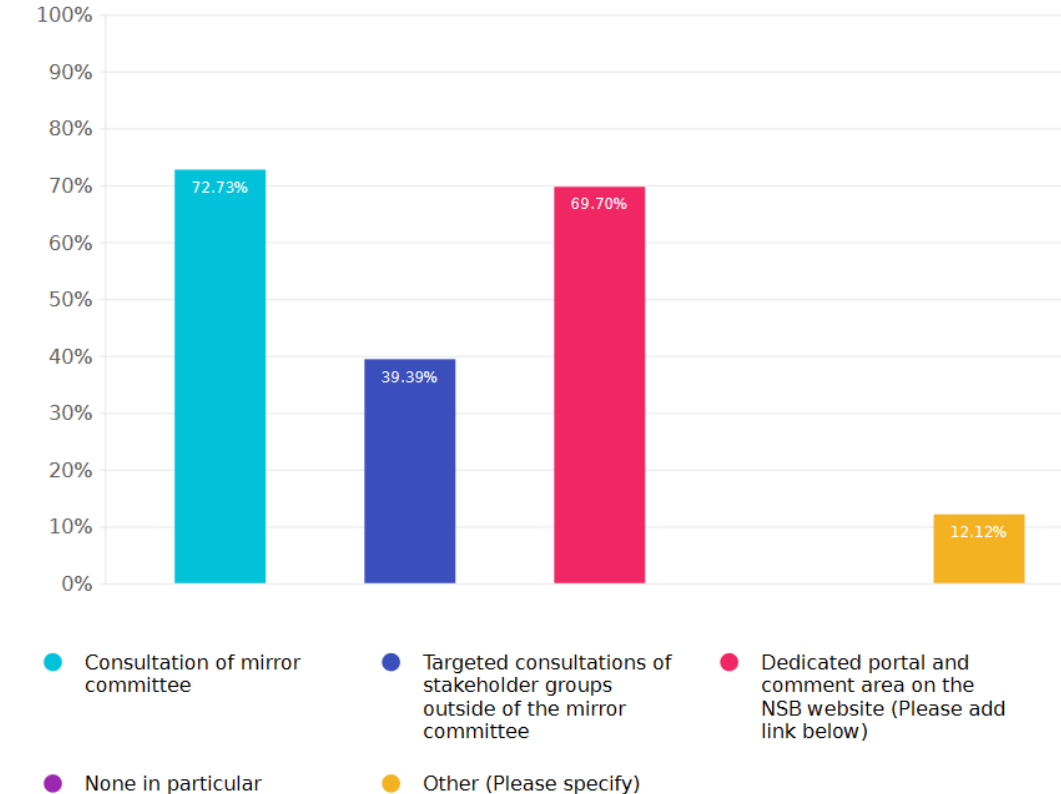
● Other (Please specify)

- When asked about data on representation within individual technical bodies, the data is slightly less clear, pointing to requirements in respective internal regulations
- Several NSBs carry out either annual or ad-hoc monitoring and analysis of the composition of different technical bodies, but it's not a widely established practice.
- 60% of NSBs reply that there are no specific mitigation measures in case one or more stakeholder categories is not represented in a technical body.
- 57% of NSBs reply that all technical meetings are made accessible in online/hybrid form

Comments on draft standards and public enquiry

10. What measures do you have in place to allow for consultation and comments on **draft standards under enquiry**? (multiple answers possible)

Answered: 33 Skipped: 2

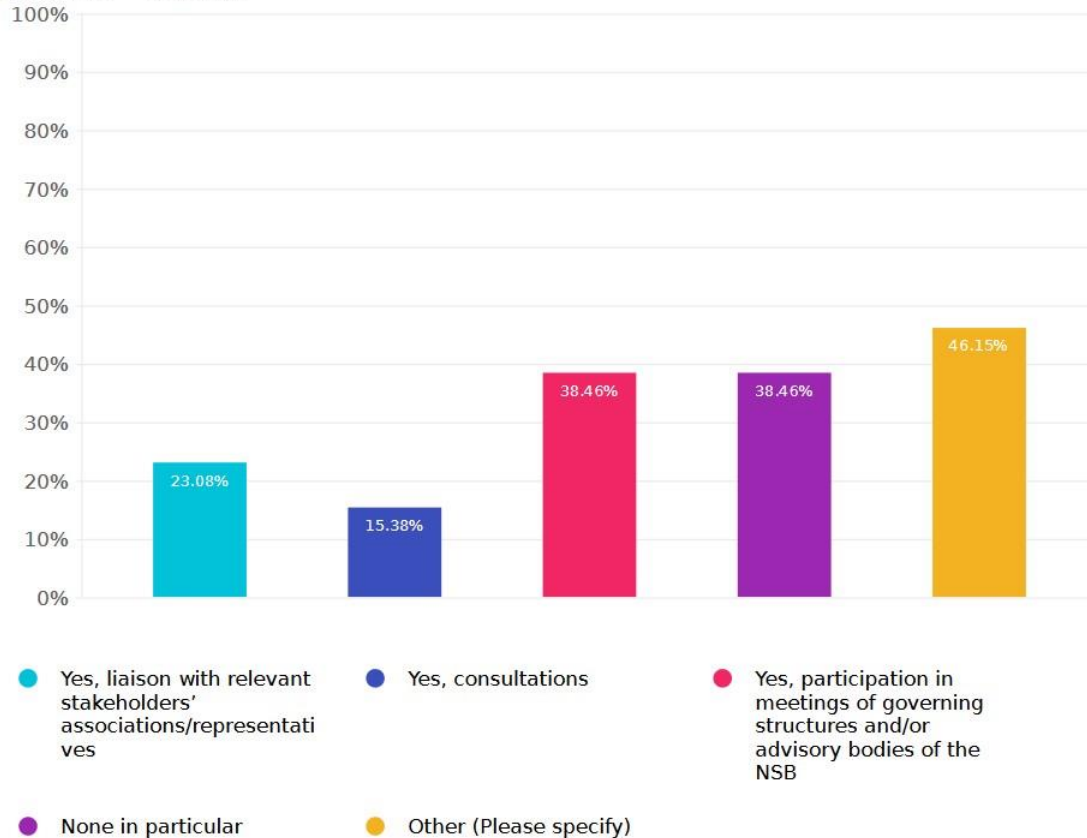


- Once the comments are gathered, 79% discussion in the competent technical body, in 48% of cases the commenter is invited to participate
- 51% of stakeholders are aware of commenting platforms/dedicated areas on NSB website to submit comments and participate in public enquiry.
- User-friendliness of such platforms/tools was generally considered positive by stakeholders (75%); negatives focused on difficulty to find the necessary information

MSs action on stakeholder issues and NSB contact

7. Are there initiatives or actions in place to gather, verify and evaluate the issues encountered by stakeholders in participating in national standardisation and interacting with NSBs? (*multiple answers possible*)

Answered: 13 Skipped: 1



- 60% of Member States indicate action to implement provisions of Regulation 1025/2012
- Two main models of action and support to inclusiveness:
 - Support given via financing of inclusiveness actions carried out by the NSBs
 - Direct interaction with (some) stakeholder categories
- In 38% of cases, no specific actions are foreseen by MSs.
- Direct liaison or consultation on issues encountered by stakeholders in a minority of cases
- Main form of evaluation of government-funded action by NSBs towards inclusiveness is audit/annual reports

Recap of main findings on effective participation

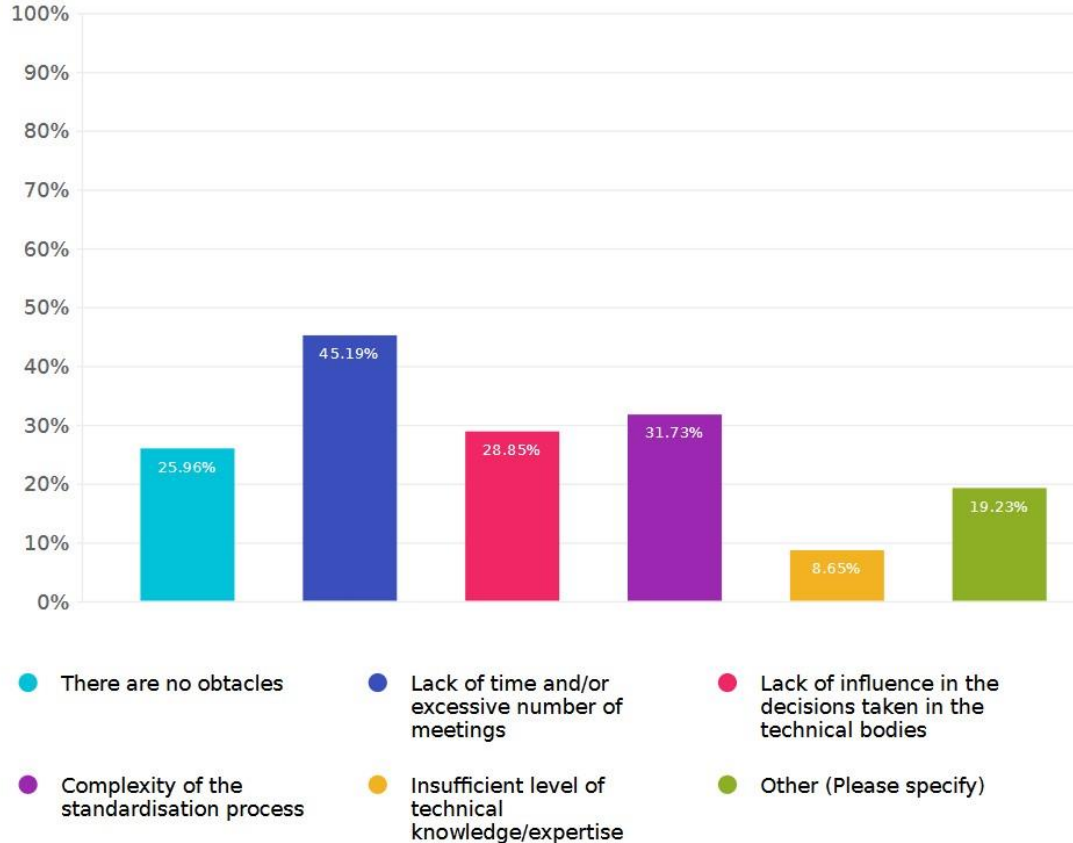
- Most common form of direct participation in standardisation work by stakeholders is participation in technical bodies via an in-house expert, but around 30% of respondents point to both participation via an external expert and “indirect” participation via membership in one or more association.
- While the amount of general information by NSBs on stakeholder participation is positive, results are inconclusive regarding data specifically linked to representation within individual technical bodies. Several NSBs carry out annual/ad-hoc monitoring, but this is not a widely established practice
- Only 57% of NSBs reply that all technical meetings are accessible either online or hybrid. Increasing this figure would greatly favour a higher participation and tackle time and financial constraints on stakeholders.
- 51% awareness by stakeholders of tools provided by NSBs to submit comments to standards under public enquiry.
- Favourable conditions for stakeholders for the purchase of standards are mostly discounts either via subscriptions (47%) or agreements with stakeholder associations (43%). A number of NSBs (NBN, HRN, NSAI, DS, ELLOT, ASI, UNI...) allow for in-person consultation of standards via reading rooms.
- Measures to favour implementation mostly consist of trainings/webinars (65%). Implementation guides and other written documents are less common (30%) – Mostly focusing on “popular” ISO standards (ISO 9001; ISO 27001...)

Obstacles to access and effective participation

Obstacles Stakeholders

5a. If your organisation participates in the standardisation process, what are the main obstacles to an effective participation and impact?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 57



- Three main sets of obstacles identified:
 - Resources (financial and non-financial)
 - Complexity of the standardisation process
 - Lack of influence in decisions
- Main barrier are financial resources, as other considerations (Time/HR constraints; insufficient expertise...) can be tackled by more funding
- Complexity of the system downplayed as obstacles interview: “A degree of complexity is almost natural”; again issue can be tackled with more funding
- Lack of influence identified as a problem particularly by societal stakeholders, who feel isolated in technical discussions. Stakeholders from all categories would like to see more direct oversight from NSBs.
- Academia highlights lack of importance/recognition of standardisation work as a barrier.

Proposals Stakeholders

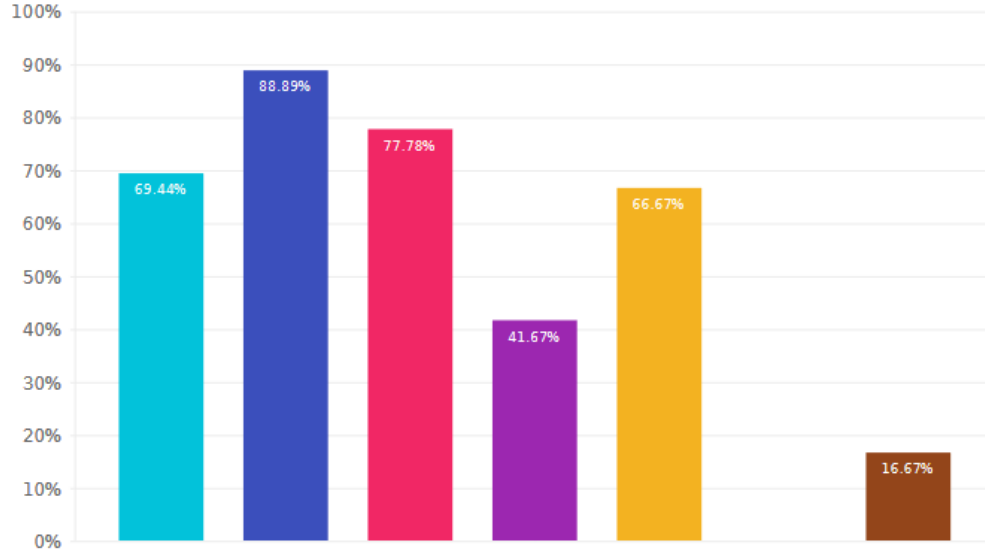
A number of suggestions were put forward by stakeholders to improve their access and participation:

- Do more to make stakeholders understand the importance and (economic) benefits of standards;
- Give more financial support to stakeholders and directly to their experts to participate in standardisation;
- Free participation in technical work for underrepresented stakeholders;
- Streamline the standardisation process and make sure that the time and effort of participants is rewarded by producing good technical results in a defined timeline;
- More publicity and outreach from NSBs about ongoing standardisation work;
- More involvement of stakeholders, using their associations and organisations;
- Make contributions in standardisation work creditable as a publication, to facilitate the participation of academics;

Obstacles NSBs

9. What are in your view the main barriers that might prevent organisations representing SMEs, environmental, consumer and trade unions' interests from participating in standardisation activities?

Answered: 36 Skipped: 3



● Lack of interest and/or relevance of standardisation to their activity

● Lack of sufficient time or human resources

● Lack of sufficient financial resources

● Difficulty in understanding the standardisation process

● Lack of (technical) expertise of these organisations in specific standardisation activity

● I don't know

● Other (Please specify)

- When discussing the main issues encountered by NSBs in engaging with stakeholders, the replies highlighted:
 - 28% Limited presence and HR capacity of stakeholders
 - 28% Limited interest in participating in standardisation from stakeholders
 - 24% Limited awareness of standards and of their importance from stakeholders
 - 12% HR constraints of the NSB

Proposals NSBs

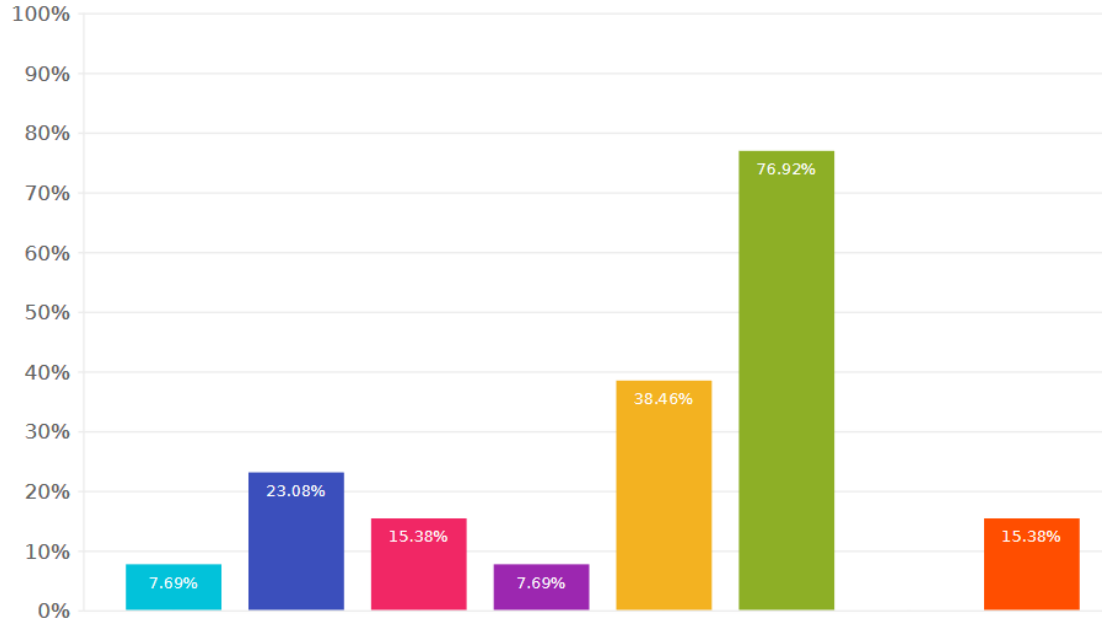
Some proposals from NSBs to improve engagement and participation of stakeholders:

- Nominate dedicated contact persons within the NSBs for the different underrepresented stakeholders categories;
- Reduced/no participation fees for underrepresented stakeholders, to be financed by dedicated public funding;
- National young standardisation professional programmes, in cooperation with universities;
- Higher discounts on the sale of standards packages for some stakeholders, as part of an annual subscription;
- Targeted awareness raising campaigns supported by testimonials from representatives and experts from stakeholder groups;
- Closer contact and cooperation between the NSBs and the respective national governments;

Obstacles Member States

8. What are the main difficulties you encounter in interacting with the national standardisation system? (*multiple answers possible*)

Answered: 13 Skipped: 1



- Interacting with National Standardisation Body/Bodies
- Interacting with experts in technical committees
- Identifying industry and/or societal stakeholders' representatives
- Liaising with industry and/or societal stakeholders' representatives
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of time or human resources

- Lack of time and HR resources identified as the main obstacle towards interaction with the national standardisation system.
- A related question on main challenges towards engaging with NSBs and/or stakeholders representatives produced the following:
 - 33% Lack of time/HR resources to follow standardisation work
 - 17% Low awareness and/or interest of stakeholders
 - 17% Limited technical capacity and expertise from stakeholders

Proposals Member States

Some proposals from Member States to improve engagement and participation of stakeholders:

- Creation of a working group between ministry and NSB to coordinate on standardisation issues;
- Creation of a centralised platform to access and monitor existing best practices in standardisation in other Member States;
- No participation fees to participate in standardisation work for societal stakeholders, SMEs and academia;
- EU incentives targeted at the participation of societal stakeholders, SMEs and academia in standardisation at national level;

Recap of main findings on obstacles

- Lack of financial resources are identified as main obstacles by a majority of stakeholders. Other issues and barriers can be addressed second-hand by improving funding.
- NSBs and Member States, on the other hand, overwhelmingly point to lack of time and HR resources as the main obstacle that they encounter
- Discrepancies between the perceptions of the obstacles by the different communities:
 - Lack of technical expertise from stakeholders is highlighted as an obstacle by a strong majority of NSBs (67%) but only by a small minority of stakeholders (8%)
 - Lack of interest in standardisation from stakeholders is pointed out as a strong obstacle to engagement from both NSBs and MSs, but it's virtually absent from stakeholder replise
- Stronger oversight by NSBs over work of technical bodies required by stakeholders to ensure balance and address issues of lack of influence by “weaker” stakeholders

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Existing best practices

Questionnaire Member States

Best practices identified in NSBs:

- Existence of well-established and well-functioning stakeholder groups and advisory bodies within NSBs.
- No fees and free access to technical work for SMEs and/or societal stakeholders. (eg: ASI; DS; NSAI; CYS...)
- Monitoring tools to allow stakeholders to keep track and identify standards
 - [DIN-Beuth Monitoring tool](#)
 - [ASI's MeinNormen Radar](#)
 - [CEI's Catalogo Guidato/MyNorma](#)
- In-person consultation of standards – Some NSBs including ASI and UNI allow for wider consultation relying on agreements with chambers of crafts/commerce and universities
- Teaching and/or individual on-boarding trainings are made available to introduce new stakeholders (DS, NSAI, ITS)

Best Practices identified in Member States:

- France - "[Credit d'Impot Recherche](#)" provides tax rebates for enterprises that participate in activity linked to research, innovation and development, including standardisation;
- Belgium - [Antenne-Normes](#). Contact points (38 total, covering 9 main sectors) for companies to receive support and guidance on standardisation-related matters, particularly on implementation
- Several countries (Sweden and others) have activated coordination groups that includes government authorities, NSBs and (in some cases) stakeholders to improve coordination on standardisation
- Countries like France and Slovenia have created interministerial groups to improve involvement and coordination in standardisation among different areas of the government

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Next steps

Next steps

- The report will be sent in the coming days to Workstream 3 members for comments and final validation
- The findings of the report and the discussion in today's workshop will lead to the drafting of a set of recommendations, aimed at Members States, NSBs and Stakeholders, to be discussed and validated by Workstream 3 members
- The recommendations will be submitted to the High-Level Forum for official approval and endorsement

Thank you!

Co-financed by the European Union and the EFTA Member States



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