



ANNUAL REPORT | 2023

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Small
Business
Standards



ABOUT SBS

Small Business Standards (SBS) is a European non-profit association (AISBL) representing the interests of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the standardisation process at the European and international levels in standardisation.

In addition, SBS aims to raise awareness among SMEs of the benefits of using standards and encourage them to get involved in the standardisation process.

SBS speaks on behalf of 22,5 million European SMEs. It is co-financed by the European Union and the EFTA Member States.

This publication only reflects the views of Small Business Standards. The European Union and the EFTA Member States are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

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FOREWORD BY THE PRESIDENT

2023 marks a significant milestone for Small Business Standards (SBS) as we celebrate our tenth anniversary. From the beginning, SBS has been dedicated to bridging the gap between SMEs and the complex world of standardisation. Having served as President from the first day, I am immensely proud of what we have achieved together. Over the past decade, SBS has become a key player in ensuring that SMEs have a decisive voice in shaping fair and growth-oriented standards.

The High-Level Forum on European standardisation (HLF) set up by the European Commission at the end of 2022 promises to give standardisation an important role to play in EU policymaking. Our participation in the forum provides an opportunity to bring the perspective of European SMEs to the discussions about standardisation, especially in areas like green, digital and resilient priorities. SBS co-leads the work on inclusiveness at the national level and contributes to six other workstreams of the Forum. SBS has also contributed to the the HLF recommendations for the 2024 EC annual work programme for standardisation and co-signed the Education and Skills for Standards pledge.

Our engagement with the European Standards Bodies, CEN, CENELEC and ETSI remains strong.

Our engagement with key standards bodies such as CEN, CENELEC, and ETSI remains strong. We proposed and discussed specific recommendations, together with the other Annex III organisations, for a governance review in support of further inclusiveness. Moreover, we secured a seat on the ETSI Board until 2026, ensuring SME representation.

Different exchanges with national and international standards bodies also took place. SBS hosted the ISO/TC 279/WG 3 meeting on Innovation Management and organised a successful webinar on innovation management standards. Moreover, SBS also drafted a series of concrete recommendations for ISO and IEC and for national standards bodies on SME inclusiveness which will be published in January 2024.





Another notable achievement was the invitation for SBS to participate in the public hearing organised by the European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) Committee as part of its own-initiative report on standardisation strategy. We also focused on sustainability initiatives, submitting comments on the draft standardisation request on the Digital Product Passport and developing a draft proposal for an Ecodesign standard for personal protective equipment (PPE). Moreover, the publication of an SBS position paper on the compatibility policy of Industry Foundation Classes (IFC) aimed at facilitating Building Information Modelling (BIM), led to the launch of a new work item within ISO/TC 159/SC 13 to deal with this issue.

As regards events, another important accomplishment was the organisation of the first edition of the Meeting Standards campaign in November, featuring activities on various standards-related topics. In addition, SBS organised a successful workshop on the digital product passport, attended by 170 participants.

Our achievements have been possible due to the support and cooperation of SBS members, experts, partners and team members. Together, we are committed to ensuring SME-friendly standards that create new opportunities. Looking ahead, digital transformation, sustainability and global competition present both challenges and opportunities. SBS will continue to advocate for standards that empower SMEs to adapt, innovate and thrive in this rapidly changing world.

Gunilla Almgren

Small Business Standards President

2023 IN NUMBERS



71 EXPERTS



250 TCs & WGs



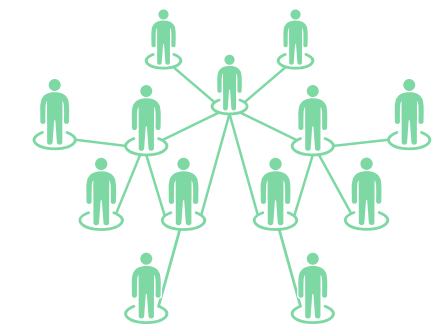
756 PARTICIPANTS
AT SBS EVENTS



10 POSITION
PAPERS



1283 NEWSLETTER
RECIPIENTS



 1404
 1648 FOLLOWERS

HIGHLIGHTS

- SME participation in technical standardisation work

In 2023, SBS appointed 71 experts to represent the interests of SMEs across 250 Technical Committees, Subcommittees and Working Groups at the European and international levels.

Meetings and training sessions for experts

SBS experts participated in a two-day training session at SBS headquarters in Brussels on 28 February and 1 March. The session provided practical information on their work and mission, introduce the various tools at their disposal and offered an update on recent technical and policy developments.

Another training session, co-organised by SBS and the CEN-CENELEC Management Centre, was held on 13 September, focusing on environmental aspects in standardisation.

Additionally, experts were invited to a webinar on 26 October, which provided an overview of the evolution of EU case law related to European harmonised standards (hENs) and at providing information about the [Advocate General's Opinion on the case C-588/21](#) (the Malamud case) and its possible implications regarding free availability of mandatory and harmonised standards.

Standardisation developments monitoring

SBS regularly monitors the developments concerning current and upcoming standardisation requests and standardisation activities. A standardisation request is a request issued by the European Commission to the European Standards Bodies (CEN, CENELEC and/or ETSI) to develop and adopt European standards or other documents in support of European policies and legislation. This activity intends to help SBS experts and members with the information they need to anticipate and contribute to the consultations related to standardisation requests and the development of related standards. Alongside this tool SBS also supported also cooperated with the consultancy Knowence to develop a [website](#) that provides up-to-date information on new standardisation work items related to SMEs' priority topics and sectors.



• Engagement with standardisation bodies

Participation in CEN and CENELEC activities

SBS continued its active participation and exchanges in different CEN and CENELEC governing and advisory bodies. The SBS President participated in the CEN and CENELEC Industry Advisory Forum (IAF), where she presented on the role of SMEs and SBS within the European standardisation system, as well as SBS priorities for 2023.

SBS representatives also attended the CEN and CENELEC Technical Boards meetings in February, May and October and the CEN BT/Technical Committee Management Group meetings in February and July. SBS closely followed the discussions and monitored draft decisions sent to the CEN and CENELEC Technical Boards by correspondence, providing comments whenever relevant.

In March, SBS was invited to the CEN-CENELEC Societal Stakeholders Group (SSG) to discuss joint [Annex III proposals](#) on the CEN and CENELEC governance review and inclusiveness made at the end of 2022. The same day, SBS presented its 2023 planned activities at the CEN-CENELEC SME Working Group meeting.

SBS attended the CEN-CENELEC Joint Policy Group meetings in January, May and September, where updates on the CEN-CENELEC Strategy 2030 were provided, with a strong emphasis on the timely citation and delivery of standards. SBS also participated in the CEN and CENELEC General Assemblies in June.

Finally, SBS was active in the CEN-CENELEC Strategic Advisory Body on Environment (SABE) and particularly in the Circular Economy topic group (March and September).

Representing the SME voice in ETSI

SBS is actively involved in the ETSI Board and General Assembly to facilitate SME participation. SBS also played an important role in the ETSI Board INCLU meetings, specifically dedicated to improving inclusiveness.

SBS participated in all four ETSI General Assemblies and all six ETSI Board meetings, where inclusiveness measures and the changes in the ETSI weighted voting system were discussed. At the November ETSI General Assembly, Justina Bieliauskaite, part of the EU DIGITAL SME Alliance, a SBS member, was elected as new Board Member in representation of SBS, with a term extending until the end of 2026.

Reaching out to international standards bodies

SBS is seeking to establish a closer relationship with ISO and IEC to ensure greater consideration of SME issues at the international level. In March, SBS was invited to participate in an ISO Customer Matters Programme Board meeting, which was set up to help identify the needs of standards users.

SBS prepared a paper with concrete recommendations for ISO and IEC on SME inclusiveness that was finally published early in January 2024. The main objective of this paper was to strengthen the role of SMEs in international standardisation, both at political and technical levels, through concrete measures.

To increase its visibility in the international standards community, SBS hosted an ISO/TC 279/WG 3 meeting on Innovation Management. Similarly, SBS invited the ITU Head of Study Groups to attend the SBS Digitalisation working group meeting in May to explain ITU's work structure and current priorities.

SBS was also invited to participate in the annual meeting between the ESOs and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) in March, where support for SMEs was discussed.

Reaching out to national standards bodies

Throughout the year, SBS explored potential future cooperation and participated in exchanges with several national standards bodies, including DIN (German Standards Organisation), the Bulgarian Standards Body, the DKE (German Electrotechnical Standards Organisation), the Maltese Standards Authority (MCCAA), the Slovenian Institute for Standardization (SIST) and the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia, and a delegation of the Vietnamese Directorate for Standards, Metrology and Quality (STAMEQ).

SBS was invited to give a presentation to the Swedish Standards Institute Board during their study visit to Brussels and to participate in the DIN SME Commission (KOMMIT) in May. At the KOMMIT meeting, SBS shared the results of the questionnaire to SME associations about their involvement in standardisation and their relation with National Standards Bodies. Additionally, SBS developed concrete recommendations for further SME involvement in standardisation at the national level based on the results of this questionnaire.

- Contribution to European policies and regulations

Participation in the High-Level Forum on European Standardisation

Since its launch in January, SBS has been very active in the [High-Level Forum on European Standardisation \(HLF\)](#). The Forum was set up under the EU Standardisation Strategy to improve the European standardisation system. At the inaugural meeting in January, SBS President Gunilla Almgren presented SBS views on the priorities for the Forum's work. At the second meeting, she updated on the progress of the HLF workstream 3 on NSB peer review and SME and civil society engagement at national level, co-led by SBS. SBS also contributed to the drafting of the HLF recommendations towards the 2024 EC Annual Union Work Programme for standardisation.

Committee on Standards

SBS continued to play an active role in the meetings of the Standards Committee and in written consultations on draft standardisation requests among the members and observers of the Committee. Notably, SBS submitted comments on standardisation requests related to lifts, artificial intelligence, the digital product passport and machinery.

Position papers and consultations

In January, SBS participated in the [public hearing](#) organised by the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) Committee of the European Parliament in the context of the [own-initiative report on the Standardisation Strategy](#), where it presented a [position paper](#) on the subject. Additionally, SBS released a [joint reply with EBC and SMEunited](#) to the Call for Evidence on the Evaluation of Regulation 1025/2012 on European Standardisation and provided feedback on the [Call for Evidence on the Single Market Programme \(SMP\) interim evaluation](#).

SBS also focused on sustainability-related initiatives, publishing position papers on "[Product priorities under the new Ecodesign for Sustainable Products](#)", the [proposal for a Right to Repair Directive](#) along with an [assessment of the IMCO amendments](#) to this Directive and, the [Green Claims Directive](#). Moreover, SBS contributed to a [joint position paper](#) with SMEunited to the public consultation on the [draft Delegated Act on the European Sustainability Reporting Standard](#), launched in June.

SBS also issued sector-specific positions mentioned in the section below.

- Sectoral activities

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT)



Two meetings of the SBS Digitalisation Working Group were held during the year. One of the key issues discussed during was the need to explore ways to strengthen the position of SME standardisation experts in ETSI and ITU.

SBS participated in a meetings of the Radio Equipment Directive (RED) Expert Group, the Multi-Stakeholder Platform (MSP) on ICT Standardisation and of the MSP Task Force on the Rolling Plan on ICT Standardisation.



The ICT sector published a position paper on the Cyber Resilience Act.

CONSTRUCTION



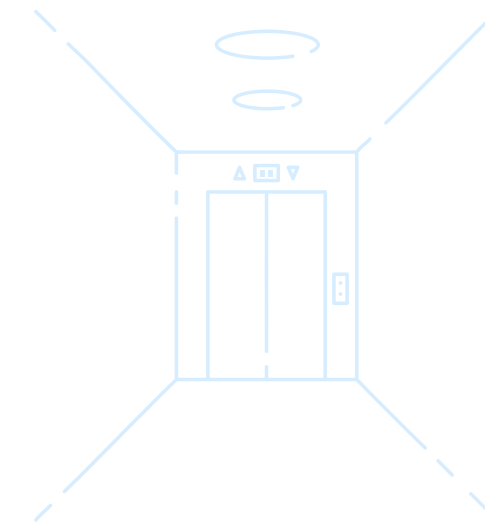
The SBS Construction Working Group offers members and experts a platform to exchange information on issues related to construction standards and policies and to coordinate the position of SBS experts and members. Additionally, an SBS Construction Forum was organised in the context of the Meeting Standards campaign in November.

SBS participated in various key meetings, including the Construction Products Regulation (CPR) Acquis Steering group, the Advisory Group for Construction Products, the Group of Notified Bodies, and the Administrative Cooperation Group on the CPR. SBS also attended the meetings of the CEN-CENELEC BT WG 9 “Strategy for the construction sector” and the CEN Sector Forum on Construction.



The construction sector published a position paper on the Industry Foundation Classes (IFC) Compatibility Policy and a co-signed letter with SBS, EBC, FIEC, CPE and ECOS regarding environmental indicators under the CPR. Finally a SME guide offering guidance and solutions regarding Contradictory Standards in Construction was also published.

LIFTS



The SBS Lift Working Group discussed, among other topics, the draft standardisation request for lifts and the difficulties encountered in representing lift SMEs in working groups at European and international level.

Additionally, the [SBS Lift Forum](#), focussing on the new Machinery Regulation and its impact in the lift sector, took place in October during the international [Interlift Trade Fair](#) in Augsburg (Germany). SBS also participated in a panel discussion organised during the European Congress of Lift SMEs organised in Spain by FEPYMA in May.

SBS ensured the representation of SME interests at the meetings of the European Commission's Machinery Expert Group, the Group of Notified Bodies for Lifts and the Lift Expert Group.



The lift sector published a [study](#) on the application of the standards EN 81-20 setting requirements for the construction and installation of passenger lifts and goods passenger lifts and EN 81-50 on lift components.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) & TEXTILE CARE



Discussions at the 2023 meetings of the SBS Working Group on PPE & Textile Care focused on SBS's position on conformity assessment for Category III PPE, progress on an eco-design standard for PPE garments and the ongoing revision of the Textile Labelling Regulation.

SBS ensured in the representation of SME interests in various meetings, including the European Commission PPE Expert Group, the Subgroup 02 on standards of the European Commission EU Medical Device Coordination Group (MDCG), the CEN-CENELEC PPE Sector Forum and the CEN-CENELEC Advisory Board for Healthcare Standards (ABHS).



SBS published positions on the "Obstacles in placing new PPE category III products onto the market" and the Formal Objection raised by Germany against EN 149:2001 and A1:2009 on respiratory protective devices.

• AWARENESS-RAISING, VISIBILITY & COMMUNICATION

SBS organises a webinar with ISO/TC 279 experts on innovation management



On 1 June, SBS organised a webinar on innovation management standards, particularly the ISO 56000 family of standards, and their potential impact on SMEs. The webinar aimed to inform SMEs about the implementation of innovation management standards in their work and processes, to raise awareness among SME representatives and discuss the need for future standardisation work in this area. This event was organised on the occasion of the hosting by SBS of a meeting of the ISO/TC 279 working group on tools and methods for innovation management (WG3).

SBS workshop on the Digital Product Passport (DPP).



On 21 June, SBS organised a workshop titled "How to ensure the Digital Product Passport empowers SMEs". The aim of the workshop was to raise awareness about the Digital Product Passport among SMEs and SME organisations, to present practical examples of existing DPPs and discuss related standardisation efforts. World Standards Day.

World Standards Day

The 2023 edition of the 'World Standards Day' organised on 14 October by ISO, IEC and ITU was dedicated to the theme 'Shared vision for a better world: Incorporating Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3'. This event offered the opportunity to reflect on how standards can contribute to well-being and health. SBS used this opportunity to highlight the contributions of its experts to Goal 3 through the development of standards in this field.





“Meeting Standards” campaign launch

SBS organised the first edition of Meeting Standards, a campaign held from 14 to 21 November 2023 designed to raise awareness among SMEs and SME organisations about the importance of standardisation. Various research projects and experts participated in the campaign, organising activities on standards-related topics such as blockchain technologies, smart manufacturing, cosmetics, AI or construction and the new CPR . The campaign also saw the launch of the “Meeting Her Standards” podcast highlighting the work of women in standardisation across key sectors. It ended on 21 November with SBS’ flagship conference on the theme “SMEs and smart manufacturing – Standards as accelerators of industry change”.



SBS celebrates its 10th anniversary

On 14 December, SBS organised a cocktail reception in Brussels to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

SBS had the pleasure of welcoming DG GROW Deputy Head of Unit for Standards Policy, Mattias Bergdahl, CEN-CENELEC Director General, Elena Santiago, and ETSI Director of Membership Development, Claire Desclercs. They delivered keynote speeches stressing the important role and accomplishments of SBS.

Brochure on the role of standards in the single market

In the context of a workshop organised in the context of the SME Assembly in Bilbao dedicated to standards and their role in the 30 years of the EU single market, SBS published a brochure on the topic.



• PROJECTS



STAND4EU, a Horizon Europe project, aims to strengthen the connections between research, innovation, and standardisation. It focuses on four technological domains: Additive Manufacturing, Welding, Smart Manufacturing/Industry 4.0/Digitalization/Artificial Intelligence, and Circular Economy. In 2023, it carried out the analysis and identification of key stakeholders involved in standardisation and identified bottlenecks in the standards development process. The [STAND4EU portal](#) was also created and will be further developed in 2024. The portal includes examples of how research and innovation projects have contributed or are contributing to standardisation. The aim is to facilitate the collection and sharing of information about the obstacles, associated remedies and best practices towards the industrial and research & innovation community and the standards developing organisations.

Project Website: <http://stand4eu.eu/>

Duration: September 2022 - October 2024



BlockStand, a project funded under the Digital Europe programme, aims to create an online blockchain community of stakeholders with the following objectives:

- Support the implementation of the European Commission's Rolling Plan for ICT Standardisation chapters on blockchain.
- Reinforce links with the European Blockchain Partnership (EBP) and the European Blockchain Services Infrastructure (EBSI), at strategic, operational, technical, practical and educational levels.
- Support the participation of European experts in international and European Standards Developing Organisations. Throughout the project, a continuous call to select experts will be open with the intention to select and fund experts to contribute to standardisation work in this area.

Project Website: <https://blockstand.eu>

Duration: May 2023 - April 2025

MEMBERS



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www.sbs-sme.eu
info@sbs-sme.eu

Rue Jacques de Lalaing 4
B-1040 Brussels, Belgium



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