



High-Level Forum on European Standardisation

WORKSTREAM 3

**NSBs peer-review (including SMEs and
civil society inclusiveness)**

**Recommendations
on national inclusiveness**

September 2024

The following recommendations stem from the work undertaken under the High-Level Forum Work Stream 3, which focuses on enhancing inclusiveness and effective participation of stakeholders in standardisation at the national level.

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|----------------------------|--|---|
| Leader: | SBS | |
| Co-leader: | CEN-CENELEC | |
| Supporting members: | Belgium Germany Ireland Italy Lithuania Luxembourg Slovenia The Netherlands | ANEC DIGITALEUROPE Digital SME Alliance ECOS ETSI ETUC Orgalim SMEunited T&D Europe |

The increased inclusiveness in standardisation at national level would also have positive knock-on effects on European and international standardisation, thanks to the national delegation principle.

While recommendations are categorised based on their primary recipients, it is important to note that a substantial number of them require a collaborative approach involving stakeholder associations, governmental authorities and standardisation bodies, therefore some recommendations will appear under multiple headings.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

- **Support the exchange of best practices**

Use the High-Level Forum on European standardisation and its Sherpa subgroup to support the exchange and tracking of best practices. This could involve creating an online repository for submitting, reviewing, and accessing best practices, and organising an annual workshop featuring presentations from Member States and NSBs that have successfully implemented effective strategies.

NATIONAL STANDARDISATION BODIES (NSBs)

- **Promote awareness-raising initiatives on standardisation in collaboration with stakeholder organisations**

NSBs should collaborate closely with national and European stakeholder organisations to increase awareness and participation in the standardisation process. To help addressing gaps regarding knowledge and awareness on standardisation from stakeholders, NSBs, with the support of stakeholder organisations, shall develop targeted awareness training and capacity-building programmes for stakeholder organisations and their experts. A particular focus should be put on enhancing their awareness of the strategic value and benefits of standardisation and ability to participate in standardisation work.

- **Establish dedicated contact points for SMEs and societal stakeholders**

A significant issue identified is the absence of clear and proactive contact points within NSBs for SMEs and societal stakeholders in standardisation. It is recommended that each NSB appoints at least one dedicated contact person for these groups to improve communication and support, thereby enhancing their engagement and influence in the standardisation process.

- **Involve different stakeholder categories in NSB governing structures and/or create specific Advisory Bodies**

The involvement of different stakeholders in the governing bodies of the NSBs varies by country, depending on each NSB's policies and structures. Establishing advisory bodies and/or dedicating board seats for underrepresented stakeholders within each NSB provides a formal platform for these groups to discuss and address issues, fostering inclusive decision-making.

- **Establish user-friendly monitoring tools**

One main challenge for stakeholders is identifying new work items and initiatives relevant to them, which is essential for their engagement in relevant standardisation. Although NSBs provide information on their websites and sometimes map affected stakeholders, it is often difficult to pinpoint all potential sectors and stakeholders affected by a specific proposal. Some NSBs have developed free monitoring systems ([DIN-Media](#)) that allow stakeholders to search for relevant national, European and international standardisation work based on keywords. These tools should be implemented nationally, but NSBs could collaborate, also with the support of the European Commission, to develop and centralise these systems.

- **Provide favourable entry conditions to SMEs, societal and underrepresented stakeholders**

Despite varying financing models, all NSBs have a shared responsibility to promote inclusivity in the standards development process. It is important to ensure all relevant national stakeholders can participate regardless of financial capacity. Access to national (mirror) committees should be free (e.g. through public subsidies) or offered at reduced rates for SMEs, societal stakeholders, and their organisations. For NSBs that charge fees for each committee, cost-reduction mechanisms, such as capping fees or offering discounts for multiple committee memberships, should be implemented to support broader participation.

- **Ensure online access to technical committee meetings and access to normative references**

Ensuring that all technical committee meetings are available in online/hybrid formats increases accessibility, allowing stakeholders to participate regardless of location, travel ability or time constraints and environmental footprints. Additionally, systematically making deliverables listed as normative references available is essential to provide stakeholders with the necessary information to offer informed feedback and contribute effectively to the standardisation work.

- **Monitor the balanced representation of stakeholders in National (mirror) Committees**

Achieving balanced representation within the National (Mirror) Committees is crucial to upholding the inclusiveness of the standard development process. A well-rounded representation ensures that no singular interest group dominates the standardisation process. This allows a broad consensus among different actors to be reached, safeguarding against the undue influence of any specific stakeholder to the detriment of other, less commonly represented stakeholders, such as SMEs or societal stakeholders.

NSBs should conduct an annual monitoring of the composition of technical bodies, implementing proactive outreach and mitigation measures when underrepresented stakeholders are absent.

- **Ensure an effective Enquiry process at the national level**

NSBs should make draft standards systematically available in full, and easily accessible during the Enquiry stage through a well-publicised, regularly updated online platform for comments. Current online portals are often not well-known, and draft standards are not always accessible. NSBs would need to make these portals more visible, establish clear procedures and adequate timeframes to submit and handle comments, and actively engage different stakeholder groups through their associations. This will ensure broader stakeholder involvement, transparency in the process, and effective incorporation of feedback into the national positions.

- **Develop initiatives to support the uptake of standards**

Develop specific actions to support the uptake of standards in cooperation with public authorities. Besides reducing prices, producing implementation guides, and offering targeted training and webinars can facilitate broader adoption and effective implementation of standards. Moreover, collaboration between NSBs and SME sectoral associations to identify key standards for specific sectors and provide access under preferential conditions through these associations can help SMEs stay up to date and access targeted information and standards at reduced prices effectively promoting the use of standards.

MEMBER STATES

- **Promote awareness-raising and education initiatives on standardisation in university and vocational training curricula**

Government authorities should promote the awareness of standards and integrate standardisation-related knowledge and courses into existing curricula for universities, vocational training, and lifelong learning, also in line with the work of the HLF Workstream 1 on Education and Skills in standards. Many SME owners and independent workers come from vocational backgrounds and need to understand the benefits of standardisation. Including standardisation in lifelong education programmes will help workers become more aware of standardisation and stay updated with industry standards.

- **Establish a dedicated contact person/office on standardisation**

Establish a dedicated contact person or office dedicated to standardisation to facilitate and streamline communication. Stakeholders will know who to reach out to provide feedback allowing governments to gather valuable insights and make informed adjustments to their standardisation policies. This continuous feedback loop can lead to improvements and better alignment with stakeholder needs. Member States should create a main access point (webpage...) to gather all relevant information concerning standardisation in each country, also sharing it making use of existing tools offered by the European Commission (eg: YourEurope; European Enterprise Network).

- **Establish internal coordination and consulting bodies with stakeholders**

Forming a national interministerial group to coordinate on standardisation-related matters across different ministries and public authorities can ensure a cohesive approach and promote a unified

national strategy in this area. Moreover, creating a National Consulting Body including representatives from the government, the NSB(s), and a broad range of stakeholders including industry, SMEs, research/academia, trade unions, environmental and consumer interests can contribute to identifying needs, priorities, challenges, build trust among stakeholders and foster a sense of ownership and collaboration in relation to standardisation policies.

- **Provide funding and tax incentives at national level**

Financial and human resources constraints are primary barriers to stakeholder participation in standardisation. Direct funding at national level to stakeholders and stakeholder associations is needed to address these constraints effectively. Support should be provided in multiple ways: tax rebates for SMEs should be complemented with direct funding for experts and associations representing specific stakeholder groups such as SMEs or societal stakeholders. Stable financial backing can help these associations better advocate for the needs of these stakeholder groups, leading to more inclusive standards that reflect diverse societal needs and also meet the needs of smaller businesses.

STAKEHOLDER ORGANISATIONS:

- **Promote awareness-raising initiatives on standardisation among the stakeholder communities**

Annex III organisations should carry out targeted awareness campaigns among their membership base to stress the importance of direct involvement of stakeholders in standardisation at national level. These campaigns should particularly focus on the advantages of standards for the relevant communities (eg: “business case for standardisation” for SMEs; promotion of public interest for societal stakeholders). This could be done by using concrete case studies, events and trainings targeted to specific groups or sectors, also in cooperation with the NSBs. Additionally, national and European stakeholder organisations should actively participate in awareness-raising initiatives carried out by NSBs and government authorities.

- **Guide and support national stakeholders in the enquiry process**

Representatives of SMEs and societal stakeholders should act as hubs and contact points for their national constituencies or membership and help them navigating the process of submitting comments and participating to the public enquiry.

- **Establish a dedicated contact person on standardisation to streamline communication**

SME and societal stakeholders’ organisations should identify a contact person to liaise with the relevant NSBs and governmental offices and help guiding stakeholders in the access to standardisation.