THE VOICE OF EUROPEAN SMEs IN STANDARDISATION

PRESS RELEASE

New Standardisation Regulation: Standards are about SME competitiveness, not just compliance

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SBS, SMEUnited and EBC raise concerns that the new proposal for a Standardisation Regulation risks reducing the role of SMEs in standardisation to supporting EU legislation, overlooking the strategic value of standards for SME competitiveness and growth.

***"We must reiterate the importance and tangibly support the economic impact of standards as a tool for competitiveness and growth for SMEs, beyond just compliance with EU legislation and policy objectives"*,** stated SBS President Philip van Nieuwenhuizen.

Indeed, several areas of the proposal require adaptations and clarifications to effectively deliver for SMEs and not roll back some of the improvements achieved through Regulation 1025/2012 on European standardisation.

The three organisations remind **the strategic impact of standards for SMEs and call on the co-legislators to recognise the business case for SMEs participation in standardisation.** While not fully fleshed out in terms of possible implementation, the proposal seems to limit the scope, relevance and impact of European SME stakeholder representatives to "*standardisation activities in support of Union legislation (…) in the development of requested standards and standardisation deliverables*". **In this sense, it is paramount to maintain the financing for functioning of Annex II stakeholder organisations and participation of SMEs experts in the development of European and international standards**.

It must be a priority to ensure robust and sustainable funding for the European Standardisation System (ESS). The ESS must be backed by robust and proportionate financial resources. New initiatives, including the free availability of referenced standards, will generate additional costs for parts of the system. It is necessary that these do not come at the expense of measures in support of the participation of SME experts in technical committees at all levels of standardisation. **The potential risk of fragmentation of the system** caused by relying beyond a strict last-resort basis on Common Specifications and on the newly created Designated Standards Development Organisations (DSDOs) must also be avoided.

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At the same time, other elements of the proposal could make the ESS more responsive and effective for SMEs. For instance, the three organisations note positively that the current overall framework for stakeholder inclusiveness is broadly upheld, and support the objective of modernising and digitalising the ESS, making it more market responsive and securing the influence of European stakeholders at the global level.

"*Citing Technical Specifications could enable SMEs to benefit more quickly from presumption of conformity and greater legal certainty*", noted SMEUnited President Davide Galli.

Additionally, EBC President Jean-Christophe Repon highlighted that "*a more systematic use of digital tools and machine-readable data formats should mean standards that are easier to access, understand and apply on site, also in construction and its around 600 harmonised standards*".

Small Business Standards (SBS) is the European association representing and supporting small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) in the standardisation process, both at European and international levels.

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SMEunited is the association of Crafts and SMEs in Europe, with 67 member organisations from over 30 European countries. SMEunited represents national cross-sectoral SME federations, European SME branch organisations and associate members. SMEunited is a recognised employers' organisation and European Social Partner.

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European Builders Confederation (EBC) is the European professional organisation representing Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and crafts in the construction sector. Recognised as a European sectoral social partner, EBC is part of the employers' delegation in the EU sectoral social dialogue for construction.

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