



ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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Small Business Standards in brief

Small Business Standards (SBS) is a European non-profit association (AISBL), co-financed by the European Commission and the EFTA Member States.

Our goal is to represent the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the standardisation process at the European and international levels. Moreover, SBS aims to raise awareness amongst SMEs about the benefits brought by the use of standards and to encourage them to get involved in the standardisation process.

SBS was set up to meet the European Union's commitment to make the standardisation system as inclusive, transparent and open as possible, as laid out in EU Regulation 1025/2012 on the European Standardisation System. While acknowledging shortcomings and challenges in the system, this piece of legislation also recognises the crucial role of public authorities in supporting SMEs in the standards-making process.

Our association represents the interests of over 10 million SMEs through 21 SME organisations:





Message from the President



I'm delighted to report that SBS managed to achieve some great results in 2018. The 2018 Work Programme was ambitious, yet SBS implemented it successfully. The Work Programme built on SBS' Strategy adopted in 2017 and was designed to strengthen the presence of SMEs in the standardisation process. It has been a successful year for SBS, from the technical, political and strategic perspectives.

Now is a good time to review the year's successes and look forward to the future. This report showcases the many ways in which we support SMEs across Europe in a standardisation context.

The year was especially marked by a historic event: SBS celebrated its 5th birthday! SBS was officially launched on 25 October 2013 as the sole organisation defending the interests of SMEs in standardisation.

SBS also elected its President, Vice Presidents, Treasurer and new Board. I am honoured to serve as the SBS Board Chairperson for the next four years and will strive to maintain the focus of our mission, continuing to act in the best interests of SMEs across Europe.

This year, SBS added a fourth sector to its sectoral approach: that of Personal Protective Equipment and Textile Care, which has already seen a number of successes. With regard to experts, SBS diversified the sectors covered in comparison to 2017. The appointment of experts to these new TCs/WGs will allow SBS to influence the standards drafting process, steering it in a direction that is favourable for European SMEs.

This continuing success reflects the long-standing trust of our funders, partners, Board and members. I would like to express my gratitude for their confidence in us. I also wish to thank our dedicated staff for working hard throughout the year to ensure the success of SBS.

Gunilla Almgren
President of Small Business Standards



Representing the interests of SMEs

SBS represents the SME perspective in standardisation, on both the political and technical levels. Technical representation is provided by experts who are appointed on an annual basis. These experts are appointed to represent SBS, based on their technical expertise and SME-related awareness in a particular field. The experts perform one of the core activities of SBS, as they represent SMEs in the actual standards development process in Technical Committees (TCs) and Working Groups (WGs) within CEN, CENELEC, ETSI, ISO and IEC.

The General Assembly appointed paid experts, as well as 16 unpaid experts, 8 of whom are new experts or new appointments. Because some experts participate as paid experts in one TC and as unpaid experts in other TCs (some at both European level and international level), it is more accurate to say that 59 individuals received 75 nominations, which amounts to participation in roughly 200 different TCs/SCs (subcommittees) or WGs, once appointed.

Out of the 75 appointments, 55 were at European level (CEN-CENELEC and ETSI) and 20 were at international level (ISO and IEC). Re-appointed experts for 2018 continue in their respective sectors. New experts were appointed in the strategically important area of Building Information Modelling (BIM), and in lifts, intelligent transport systems, protective clothing, welding, roof coverings and gypsum products.



The SBS experts' meetings were held in Brussels on 13-14 February and 8 November

Since 2016, SBS has implemented its sectoral approach by strengthening cooperation with construction, ICT and lift organisations. This year marks the extension of SBS' sectoral approach to a fourth category of SMEs working in the PPE and textile care sector.

The third SBS Construction Forum was held in Brussels on 7 November and focused on dangerous substances, SMART CE marking, Environmental Product Declarations and standardisation requests. The first SBS PPE and Textile Care Forum took place on the same day, concentrating on the new PPE Regulation and the Guidelines document. The SBS Forum on ICT Standards was held on 23 January and the discussions centred around "Open standards in ICT procurement". Lastly, SBS organised a seminar dedicated to lift standards on 31 May, about the convergence of safety standards for lifts.



Visibility and information

SBS seeks to raise SME awareness about standardisation and motivate SMEs to become involved in the standardisation process. Its ability to achieve these objectives is directly related to its ability to communicate effectively and thus engage with its different audiences.

2018 was an important turning point, because the association developed a communication strategy outlining the actions to be undertaken by SBS to enhance the visibility of its activities over the next three years. The strategy allowed SBS to communicate in the most effective way possible and maximise the impact of its messages.

Moreover, the time seemed right to develop a strong identity for the association, in order to improve its recognition among the European institutions and in the Member States. To this end, the SBS corporate brochure was developed, with its own distinctive look and feel. This tool is designed to help representatives familiarise external audiences with the association.



SBS corporate brochure

2018 has also been a very eventful year. On 30 May, SBS organised its fourth annual conference at the Centre for Fine Arts (Bozar) in Brussels. The theme of this year's event was "25 years of the Single Market", which gave SBS an opportunity to reach out to new institutions, i.e. the WTO and other DGs of the European Commission, namely DG Trade.

Besides the institutions that provided the political context, the conference allowed several NSBs and representatives of European and non-European SMEs to share their experiences of standards and the impacts on their businesses.

Once again this year, the SBS conference included a unique aspect: its “real case studies” of SMEs, in this case European SMEs exporting outside the EU and non-EU SMEs seeking to enter or having successfully entered the EU market.



SBS annual conference “Standards: A gateway for SMEs to the European Single Market and beyond?” in the Museum of Fine Arts

On 4 December, Small Business Standards celebrated its fifth birthday with a cocktail event in the European Parliament’s MEP Lounge, thanks to MEP and IMCO Vice Chair Anna Maria Corazza Bildt. The event was supported by Kerstin Jorna (Deputy Director-General, DG for Economic and Financial Affairs, European Commission) and Hans-Olaf Henkel (MEP and ITRE Vice Chair). Both commended SBS for its hard work in standardisation over the last half-decade, while looking forward to further successes on behalf of all European SMEs going forward.

A key message from SBS during the event was a call for the European institutions to schedule a European year of standardisation. This would enable them to draw attention to the specific issue of standardisation. An official year of standardisation would also raise Europeans’ awareness about the importance of harmonised standards, with a view to further shaping standards that benefit everybody.



Raising SME awareness

Another core mission of SBS is to raise awareness amongst SMEs about standardisation. This activity aims to inform and train SMEs, either directly or through their trade associations, about the standardisation system and about the benefits SMEs can gain from using standards.

The national seminars are organised in collaboration with a trade association at national level, as well as the national standardisation organisation(s) (NSOs) of the country. This activity is therefore one of the most important initiatives to engage with both types of stakeholders.



National seminars

This year, SBS organised three national seminars. The aim of the seminars is to raise awareness about standards and to inform and train SMEs about the advantages of standards, as well as to foster an exchange of views between European and national representatives and stakeholders of the standardisation system.

The first national seminar was held on 6 June in Cologne (Germany) with SBS' member, UEG (the Union of European Scaffolding Contractors).



SBS Director Christel Davidson introducing SBS at a seminar in Cologne on 6 June

The second seminar, organised with the support of HOK (the Chamber of Trades and Crafts), was held on 11 October in Zagreb (Croatia). Finally, SBS organised a seminar in Lisbon (Portugal) on 17 December with the Portuguese Industrial Association (AIP).



Opening session at the Croatian seminar on 11 October



Debates among the participants at the seminar held on 17 December in Lisbon

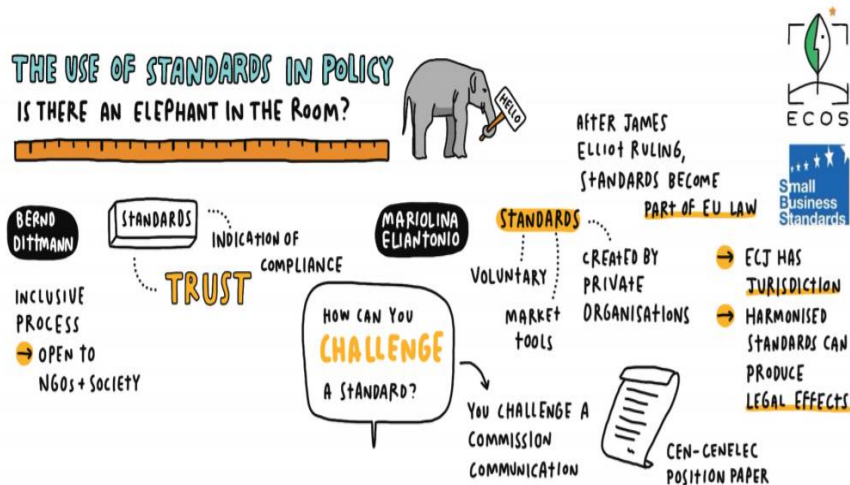


Workshop about the use of standards in policy

On 12 June, SBS and ECOS, the organisations representing and defending the interests of SMEs and the environment in standardisation, organised a workshop entitled “The use of standards in policy: is there an elephant in the room?”. The workshop was held at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels. The workshop built on the landmark ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in the James Elliott case, which for the first time acknowledged that harmonised European standards are part of EU law. It brought together a large audience, including policymakers, experts and other stakeholders, to discuss how to ensure an effective and legitimate use of harmonised standards in European laws and policies.



SBS/ECOS workshop on 12 June in Brussels



Part of the visual report from the workshop



“Train the trainer” seminar organised by SMEunited

In collaboration with its co-founder SMEunited (formerly UEAPME), a second edition of the “train the trainer” programme was held in Brussels on 6 December 2018. This programme aimed to raise awareness about the importance of direct SME participation in the standardisation process, providing training on drafting standards, standardisation rules and the mechanisms for participation in the drafting of standards.



Twinning seminar in Graz

On 8 November, SBS and the Wirtschaftskammer Österreich (the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber) organised a twinning seminar between the SIST (the Slovenian Standardisation Institute) and ASI (Austrian Standards International). A specific session was dedicated to those standards that support SMEs in implementing innovative technologies.





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