

BSI and SMEs 2015: report under Article 6(3) of EU Regulation 1025/2012 on European Standardization

Contents

Introduction 3

Measures to facilitate SMEs’ access to standards and standard development 3

Understanding standards and their benefits..... 3

Getting involved in standardization 3

BSI’s SME Forum 4

Finding the right standards..... 5

Accessing standards..... 5

Improving engagement with SMEs 5

Exchanging good practices with other National Standards Bodies 6

Introduction

This report outlines how BSI as the UK's National Standards Body has responded to Article 6(3) of the EU Regulation on Standardization 1025/2012 during 2015. This Article requires all EU National Standards Bodies (NSBs) to provide annual reports on how they have "encouraged and facilitated the access of SMEs¹ to standards and standards development processes" and how they have exchanged best practices on SME participation with other EU NSBs.

Measures to facilitate SMEs' access to standards and standard development

BSI continues to provide a number of tools and resources to enable SMEs to:

- Understand standards and their benefits;
- Get involved in standards development; and
- Find the right standards for their business.

Further information is given throughout this report and links to the aforementioned tools and resources are available in one convenient location through BSI's '*Standards and small businesses*' web page (<http://www.bsigroup.com/sme>).

Understanding standards and their benefits

The BSI '*Standards and small businesses*' webpage provides information on how standards can help small businesses as well as providing links to other areas of the BSI website that help to explain what standards are and how they can improve business performance and encourage innovation. From this page SMEs are able to download '*The small business guide to standards*' free of charge which contains case studies from SMEs that have benefited from standards.

Getting involved in standardization

BSI recognizes that small businesses represent a large and important section of British industry and as such provide a number of mechanisms and routes to participate in the development of standards:

¹ Small and medium-sized enterprises: businesses with fewer than 250 employees and with an annual turnover of under €50m/balance sheet of under €43m.

- Small business representatives are able to become a committee member and contribute to the drafting of standards. There is no charge to participate in BSI committees and SMEs are not required to become a subscribing member of BSI in order to do so. The primary method of participating in a BSI technical committee is to be nominated to represent a trade association or professional body. As such an organization of any size can be nominated and in this way many small business continue to be represented on our committees. In addition committee members that have actively participated in the development of a standard will receive a complimentary copy upon the standard's publication.
- Committee members, including those from SMEs, are able to participate in free of charge training courses that are relevant to standardization. Courses available include Understanding European (CEN) Procedures, Working Across Cultures and Taking the Chair in Standardization. The full committee member training brochure can be found at <http://www.bsigroup.com/Documents/about-bsi/committee-members/BSI-Committee-member-training-brocure-2016.pdf>.

The UK Government provides support for UK committee members travelling to overseas standards meetings through the Assisted International Travel Scheme (AITS). This scheme is administered by BSI and in 2015 approximately 74% of the support was given to organizations in the SME/self-employed/unemployed category (a similar figure to that recorded in 2014).

It is however recognised that due to resource constraints it may not be possible for an SME representative to fully participate as a committee member or to attend face-to-face committee meetings. To this end BSI offers a number of online tools and has invested in upgraded meeting facilities to encourage and promote SME engagement. These include the ability to:

- Submit new ideas for standards, or comment on proposals for new standards originating from the European and International standards bodies through the new work item proposal page: <http://standardsproposals.bsigroup.com/>
- View and comment on draft standards of National, European or international origin through the draft review system. Comments received via the online system will be reviewed and considered by the responsible BSI committee: <http://drafts.bsigroup.com/>.
- Participate remotely in committee meetings as a result of investment in meeting room technology at BSI's head office to enable high quality video and audio conferencing. In 2015, BSI rolled out new web-conferencing tools which help to increase the use and availability of remote meetings.

BSI's New Proposals system, Draft Review system and Standards Development website will be substantially upgraded in 2016 in order to further support the access of SMEs to standards and standards development activities.

BSI's SME Forum

As well as the above mechanisms for providing access for small businesses to participate in the standards development process, BSI offers an SME Forum.

Established in 2013, the Forum aims to provide an opportunity for SMEs to engage with BSI on standardization policy and strategy issues. Feedback from the Forum is passed onto the Standards and Policy Strategy Committee, which is in turn tasked with advising and reporting to the BSI Board on standardization matters.

There is no charge to join the Forum and membership is open to small businesses themselves, trade or professional associations representing SMEs and local and central government departments.

Finding the right standards

BSI has a range of tools to help SMEs, and other stakeholders, to find the right standards for their business.

The BSI standards development portal enables all stakeholders to see which standards are being developed and who is taking part in the development: <http://standardsdevelopment.bsigroup.com/>.

The online BSI Shop provides more detailed information on many of the standards in BSI's catalogue: <http://shop.bsigroup.com/> including a new 'preview' feature which allows users to view the opening pages of standards free-of-charge. In addition, for many standards information on who should use a standard, the benefits of using it, an indication of contents and where relevant the interrelationships with other standards is also provided.

Alternatively, the scope and contents of a standard will be made available on request via the BSI Knowledge Centre. The aim of these services is ultimately to enable standards users, in particular but not only SMEs, to make an informed decision as to which standard is right for them.

Accessing standards

Organizations of any size are able to visit the BSI Knowledge Centre to review the text of published standards. For subscribing BSI members or SMEs that are members of a BSI committee there is no fee for the use of this facility. Non-members are able to browse for free for two hours before incurring a small hourly fee for any time over this. Alternatively access to BSI's full catalogue of standards is available in a number of public and university libraries throughout the country.

Standards can also be accessed through the online BSI Shop, directly through BSI Customer Services (+44 845 086 9001 or cservices@bsigroup.com) or by subscription through one of BSI's subscription products such as BSOL, Eurocodes Plus or Compliance Navigator. More details are available on the BSI website (www.bsigroup.com).

The vast majority of BSI subscribing members are SMEs and as such benefit from up to 50% off the price of many standards. As the cost of becoming a BSI subscribing member is calculated by size of organization and turnover, SMEs receive a lower membership rate.

Improving engagement with SMEs

BSI has continued to carry out specific outreach work during 2015 that has been of benefit to SMEs, such as holding regional open committee meetings and Standards

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Forum events. The aim of such events is to enable easier participation in the standards development process and to facilitate the involvement of regionally based organizations in BSI activities.

Exchanging good practices with other National Standards Bodies

BSI actively participates in European activities, through CEN and CENELEC, to improve access to standards and standardization for SMEs.

BSI has been at the forefront of this work for a number of years and continues to provide the Chairman of the CEN-CENELEC SME Working Group and the Convenor of the CEN-CENELEC SME Working Group Task Force 1 on Communication to SMEs.

The SME Working Group has previously been responsible for the development of the SME Toolbox that is available on the CEN-CENELEC website: <http://www.cencenelec.eu/sme/Pages/default.aspx> and BSI has largely replicated the information available through the 'Toolbox' on the *Standards and small businesses* webpage in order to help SMEs to understand the benefits of standards, how to find the right standards and how to shape their content.

The 'Toolbox' also links to the national contact points for each CEN and CENELEC member, including BSI. This contact point is able to provide advice to small businesses on how to get involved in standardization and answer non-technical (i.e. non-interpretation) questions on specific standardization projects.

Additionally BSI has worked with other National Standards Bodies throughout Europe and further afield in order to share good practice on how to involve SMEs in standardization. For example in May 2015, BSI participated in an event organized by the Brazilian National Standards Body (ABNT), in order to share experiences and to further encourage the involvement of small businesses in standards development.