

BSI and SMEs 2018: report under Article 6(3) of EU Regulation 1025/2012 on European Standardization

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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 2018. 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. This contains case studies from SMEs that have benefited from standards.

In November 2018, BSI relaunched its "Standards Outlook" magazine and the first issue included an article on how standards help SMEs unlock their potential to trade, internationally and within the UK (<https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/about-bsi/uk-national-standards-body/standards-outlook-2018/>).

Getting involved in standardization

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

- Small business representatives are able to become committee members and contribute to the drafting of standards. There is no charge to participate in BSI committees and SMEs are not required to become subscribing members 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

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.

professional body. As such, an organization of any size can be nominated and in this way many small businesses continue to be represented on our committees. 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-brochure-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 2018 approximately 76% of the support was given to organizations in the SME/self-employed/unemployed category (up from 73% in 2017).

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. For this reason, BSI offers a number of online tools to encourage and promote SME engagement. For example, the Standards Development Portal enables stakeholders, including SMEs, to access information about standards and standards development activities. In particular, it helps users to:

- Suggest ideas for new standards
- View and comment on proposed and draft standards
- Discover and track standards in development
- Browse published standards
- Find out which stakeholders are represented on BSI committees and discover which standards they are working on.

The portal can be accessed at <http://standardsdevelopment.bsigroup.com/>.

BSI has also continued to invest in upgraded meeting facilities to provide an improved environment for standards development work. This includes new technology to facilitate improved access for those not able to attend in person.

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 the organisations involved in their development:
<http://standardsdevelopment.bsigroup.com/>.

The online BSI Shop (<http://shop.bsigroup.com/>) provides more detailed information on many of the standards in BSI's catalogue, including a 'preview' feature which allows users to view the opening pages of standards free-of-charge. In addition, for many standards,

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information is also provided on who should use a standard, the benefits of using it, an indication of its contents and the interrelationships with other standards.

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 additional time. Access to BSI's standards is also available in a number of public and university libraries.

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.

In 2018, we worked with the UK Government to launch a standard on product corrective action. While this is of relevance to businesses of all sizes, we have sought to make it more easily available to SMEs.

Improving engagement with SMEs

BSI has continued to carry out specific outreach work during 2018 that has been of benefit to SMEs, such as holding regional committee meetings and Standards 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. BSI has also continued to engage with other organisations that represent SMEs, including the British Chambers of Commerce, the Trade Association Forum and the Forum for Private Business.

BSI also has a programme to actively manage relationships with the key bodies that nominate members to committees. These are mostly trade associations, whose memberships includes many SMEs. BSI sends frequent newsletters to these bodies to inform them about standards developments. For many of these associations, a BSI employee has been nominated to manage the relationship and help them to keep their membership informed on standards.

BSI continued to promote the "Little Book of Quality Management for Small Businesses". This introductory guide to quality management was written with the help of many UK experts, small business owners and users of ISO 9001, including BSI's Quality Management Small Business Advisory Panel. BSI

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also developed a "Little Book of Occupational Health and Safety" which will be published in early 2019.

BSI also established a forum to mirror the CEN/CENELEC Industry Advisory Forum and this group includes a SME representative.

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. This includes our membership of the CEN-CENELEC SME Working Group.

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.