

SME participation, resources and standards uptake discussed at first High-Level Forum on Standardisation

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Brussels, 20/01/2023 – Small Business Standards, SMEUnited and the Digital SME Alliance represented the interests of SMEs at the High-Level Forum on European Standardisation. They stressed the importance of SME involvement in international standardisation processes, the need to avoid a proliferation of standards and to provide sufficient resources for SMEs to participate in standardisation.

One of the objectives of the High-Level Forum is the identification of standardisation priorities in support of EU policies and legislation. In this context, the SME representatives highlighted the importance to start from an overview of already existing standards in support of the green and digital transition to avoid a proliferation of standards. Additionally, a stronger focus on their uptake, especially among SMEs should be guaranteed. SMEs often struggle to find their way in the increasing number of standards being developed every year.

Ensuring the effective participation of European SMEs in international standardisation is also raised as a major challenge. In addition to contribute to a better coordination of European positions at the international level, SME representatives stressed the importance to work on concrete recommendations and actions to increase inclusiveness in international standardisation. This should be undertaken with the support of like-minded trade partners.

The standardisation strategy announced the launch of a peer review between Member States and national standards bodies to identify where SME participation at the national level could be improved. SME representatives highlighted that the Forum should support this process, identify best practices, and come up with recommendations in this area.

Finally, it will be key to guarantee sufficient resources to support the participation of SMEs in standardisation at the national, European and international levels. Given the key role of standards for the digital and green transition, it is important that additional resources are provided to contribute from the SME perspective.

Commenting on the creation of the High-Level Forum, **SBS President Gunilla Almgren** said: “It is good to see there is a strong presence of SME associations in the High-Level Forum. SMEs are the majority of companies in Europe. If we want standards to support the EU resilience, digital and green objectives it is essential SME characteristics and specificities are taken into account in the discussions of this new Forum”.

Oliver Grün, President of the **European DIGITAL SME Alliance (DSME)**, commented: “ICT standards are tools not only for regulatory compliance. They enable digital and green transitions. We, as SMEs, have taken the leadership in strategic standards-making at international level, like oneM2M for the Internet of Things. Within the High-Level Forum, we want to work hand in hand with governments to pursue European values and interests in strategic standardisation work within ITU-T, ISO, IEC, 3GPP and oneM2M.”

Concluding, **Petri Salminen**, President of **SMEunited**, stated: “One of the topics I recommend the High-Level Forum to assess is the resources dedicated to ensure the involvement of SMEs in the standardisation process. The digital and green transition combined with new regulatory requirements create an avalanche of new standards initiatives. At the same time, the normal work of the standardisation organisations continues, for instance, for personal and protective equipment, construction, machinery, etc. Additional resources are required to allow SME experts to contribute to the development of these standards.”

The European Commission announced the creation of a High-Level Forum on European Standardisation in its standardisation strategy published in February 2022. Today, the first meeting of the Forum took place, gathering Member States, European Standardisation Bodies, the industry, consumers and other stakeholders.

About the organisations

Founded in 2013, Small Business Standards (SBS) is the European association that represents and defends SMEs’ interests in the standardisation process at European and international levels. SBS is co-financed by the European Union and EFTA. – www.sbs-sme.eu

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. SMEunited was formerly known as UEAPME. – www.SMEunited.eu

The European DIGITAL SME Alliance (DSME) is the largest network of ICT small and medium enterprises in Europe, representing more than 45,000

enterprises in total. The Alliance is the joint effort of 30 national and regional SME associations from EU Member States and neighbouring countries to put digital SMEs at the centre of the EU agenda.
– www.digitalsme.eu