

## Introduction

This report outlines how the Bureau for Standardisation (NBN) has responded to Article 6(3) of the EU Regulation on Standardisation 1025/2012. This article requires that all EU National Standards Bodies (NSBs) provide annual reports on how:

- they have “encouraged and facilitated the access of SMEs to standards and standards development processes”
- they have exchanged best practices on SME participation with other EU NSBs.

## Measures to facilitate access of SMEs to standards and standards development

The Belgian economy is dominated by SMEs. According to EUROSTAT<sup>1</sup>, 99,8% of the Belgian companies are SMEs and the share of micro companies is 92,1%.

NBN is governed by the Belgian law of 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2003. From the outset, the legislator has put emphasis on a national standardisation system where “Sector operators” have a major role to play. These “sector operators” predominantly represent SME interests.

### Understanding standards and their benefits

NBN recently launched a new website that is less technical and more user-friendly than the previous version. This allows us to communicate in an understandable language with the SMEs, explaining them the benefits of standards.

### Finding the right standards and accessing these standards

The improved search engine on the NBN website allows SMEs – as well as other interested parties – to find the standards they require. Moreover, in our library, everyone has free access to the NBN collection of standards.

For specific sectors, NBN composes special collections of standards (standards packages) which are offered at reduced prices. Such a standards package can also be custom made, in function of the needs of the SME. It should be noted that SMEs also enjoy discounts for the purchase of individual standards.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/performance-review/>

### Getting involved in standardisation

NBN and its "Sector Operators" organise events, road shows and other activities around specific themes. The main objective of these events is to:

- Attract new experts, willing to contribute to standardisation
- Promote standardisation
- Stimulate the use of standards.

SME experts joining a national committee pay a small yearly fee to cover the administration cost of the committee. NBN also organises specific training sessions for Belgian experts, to give them a better insight into the process of standardisation.

### Engagement with SMEs

Due to the decentralized structure of the Belgian standardisation landscape, many standardisation activities are managed by sector operators. In addition, the NBN administrative board membership is – to a large extent – reserved for representatives of federations and societal stakeholders.

In collaboration with the federal public authorities, 23 Standards Antennas (Standards offices) inform and educate businesses – mainly SMEs – about standards and their importance for competitiveness (see also

[http://economie.fgov.be/en/entreprises/Market\\_Regulation/Standardization/Standards\\_Offices/#.Uwc1X4eYY1U](http://economie.fgov.be/en/entreprises/Market_Regulation/Standardization/Standards_Offices/#.Uwc1X4eYY1U))

## Exchanging good practices with other National standards bodies

NBN has regular exchanges with other NSBs. The vicinity of the CEN-CENELEC Management centre gives NBN first hand information on the latest policy changes in the standardisation world.