

BDS Activities to Support SMEs in 2015

1. Introduction

The report summarizes the activities implemented in 2015 by BDS to support SMEs in the application of standards and to encourage them for participation in the standardization process.

The document draws the attention to BDS policies and strategic documents resulting from the implementation of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Standardization. The report highlights also the knowledge and information we produced, the events we organized, as well as the actions we implemented to facilitate small and medium-sized businesses in Bulgaria to benefit from standards and standardization.

2. Regulation 1025/2012 on European Standardization

Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on European Standardization is the legal basis for the Union to use European standards for products and for services in support of Union legislation and policies, to identify ICT technical specifications and to finance European standardization. The Regulation also sets obligations to European standardization organizations (CEN, CENELEC and ETSI) and national standardization bodies on transparency of standardization processes and on stakeholder participation in European and national standardization activities.

BDS normative and working documents set the backgrounds for implementing the obligations under the Regulation. To facilitate SMEs to participate in the standardization process BDS provides terms and conditions how they could be involved in the standardization process without being BDS members. This is provided in BDS Statutes and Internal Rules on standardization activities. Non-member SMEs could participate in the TCs' work as observers and they are entitled to receive all working documents and to comment on them without having the right to vote, when voting is required.

In 2015 for the first time two non-member SMEs benefitted from that opportunity and participated in the activities of BDS/TC 59 Ergonomics and BDS/TC 80 Electronic data interchange for administration, commerce and transport.

3. BDS Strategy 2014-2017

BDS Strategy 2014-2017 places SMEs and their organizations as core target groups of BDS efforts to involve stakeholders in the standardization process and to intensify the cooperation with the interested parties.

The following particular objectives and measures are incorporated in the strategic document:

Priority 2

Expanding the scope of activities in new priority areas and sectors of the economy and society, providing new services, promoting and facilitating the access of micro, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to standards and to the processes of their development

Strategic Objective 2.3

Encouraging and facilitating the access of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to standards and to the processes of their development

2.3.1 Establishment of a mechanism, including through change of BDS regulations, for adequate involvement of micro, small and medium enterprises in the standardization process;

2.3.2 Creating conditions for advantages, price reductions or other bonuses when purchasing standards;

2.3.3 Exploring best practices in other EU member states and adapting them to the present Bulgarian conditions.

Strategic Objective 3.4

Intensification of the dialogue with public organizations, including consumer protection organizations

3.4.1 Establishing strategic partnerships with public (non-governmental) organizations for creating joint platforms of information, guidance and attracting businesses, primarily SMEs in the standardization process

3.4.2 Improving the dialogue with consumer protection organizations to encourage their involvement in the processes of application of standards.

4. SMEs' access to standards

Currently, **free access** to draft standards is provided at BDS Information Centre (library), where everyone who is interested could read them.

Password protected online access to standards is provided both to BDS members through BDS website, as well as to non-member SMEs, which have decided to benefit from the opportunity to participate in the standardization process. The latter pay a fee to read the draft standards.

BDS also offers a **service for online reading of standards** "Standards on your screen". It allows SMEs to read standards remotely from their offices and locations paying a low price that each Bulgarian enterprise could afford.

5. Activities

BDS provides targeted products, services and events – seminars, collections of standards at special rates, online free access to the scopes of standards, etc. – which support SMEs in the vast world of standardization. Facilitating the access to standardization process for SMEs is BDS priority.

5.1 Events

BDS organized **five seminars** on topics of interest for SMEs with the purpose to make standards easier to understand and apply, and to raise awareness on the benefits of participation in the standardization process. The seminars covered:

1. The European standard EN 206:2013 and its implementation in Bulgaria;
2. Modern lighting systems;
3. Energy efficiency, new ordinances and related standards, construction products and their use in construction works;
4. Changes, philosophy and new requirements of the fifth edition of ISO 9001:2015;
5. Risk analysis and assessment of elevators, machinery and equipment.

The total number of participants in the seminars is 165, most of them representing SMEs.

In 2015 BDS participated in two exhibitions: Security Expo in Sofia (through advertisements) and the International Technical Fair in Plovdiv (with an exhibition stand). The purpose of the participation is to increase the understanding of Bulgarian companies about the standardization process and the use of standards, and to inform them about BDS activities.

BDS reached **over 200 companies** through the exhibitions.

5.2 Publications

BDS maintains on its **web-site seven brochures in Bulgarian on standardization in various sectors**, following the recommendations to raise awareness and to encourage SMEs to participate in the standardization process. The brochures cover a wide range of standards, which are of interest for Bulgarian companies. They are targeted to SMEs and their associations, but are also useful for everyone interested in the most popular standards in the relevant sectors: “Standards - Benefits and Achievements”; “Management Systems”; “Construction Standards”; “Services Standards”; “Standards and Food”; “Energy Efficiency”; “Standards and IT”.

Seven free ISO brochures are also uploaded to explain the benefits and basic issues on ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. The purpose is, on the one part, to raise the interest to those standards and on the other, to facilitate the understanding of SMEs about standards and standards development.

In order to promote the standardization activities BDS prepares specialized publications such as “**BDS Compass**” **magazine**, published every three months and available online at BDS website. The edition is addressed to enterprises, consumers, manufacturers, control authorities, educational institutions and others. The topics of the magazine affect all areas of the economy and the magazine is also sent via e-mail to over 100 business and branch associations.

In 2015 BDS issued 10 **electronic newsletters**, which were sent to BDS members and to business and branch associations. The latter are asked to distribute them to their members. The electronic edition contains up-to-date information on standards – novelties in standardization, popular, new and important standards, promotes standards collections, provides information on seminars, etc. It is intended for representatives of small and medium-sized business in Bulgaria. The purpose of the newsletter is also to encourage the participation of SMEs in the standardization process. According to a survey conducted in December 2015, the newsletter is highly appreciated by the companies and they propose it to be released on more frequent basis.

5.3 Providing services and discount prices for SMEs

Services:

To facilitate SMEs in knowing and applying standards, in 2015 BDS continued to provide the service of **online reading of standards at very low prices**. The service offers the customers the convenience to read standards remotely - at their offices or homes, without wasting time and money.

Companies that have purchased popular or important standards are **informed by e-mail on any changes of circumstances** – e.g. amendments, corrigenda, withdrawal and replacement, translation into Bulgarian, etc.;

Various methods of e-payment are maintained and improved, which are welcomed by the business, as they facilitate the purchase of standards and save time for customers.

SMEs and their associations could **use BDS facilities** at very low prices for holding meetings or events.

Discount prices:

Discount prices for purchase of standards are offered to SMEs on various occasions, such as when participating in BDS seminars or for special events. Participants in BDS workshops and seminars are given the opportunity to buy standards at discount prices.

Bundles of standards are sold at significantly reduced prices.

BDS has special rates for bundles of standards for SMEs. For 2015 BDS offered 19 collections:

- ISO 9000 Quality Management Systems - basic standards;
- ISO 9000 and ISO 10000 Quality management systems;
- Social Responsibility and Environment;
- Safety of toys;
- Energy efficiency – Energy performance of buildings;
- Conservation of Cultural Property – Fundamental standards;
- Conservation of Cultural Property – Test methods and tools for conservation works;
- ISO/IEC 27000 Information technology – Security techniques – Information security management systems;
- ISO 22000 Food safety management systems;
- Eurocodes - 10 books comprising 58 parts of Eurocodes; they are sold separately or as a complete collection of 10 books

To facilitate SMEs in using standards, almost all of the standards included in the collections are translated into Bulgarian.

SME Portal at BDS website

BDS maintains **SME web-portal**, which has been regularly updated with links and current information. The web-portal contains information for SMEs representatives to raise their awareness both in terms of participation in the standardization process and the use of standards. The portal helps SMEs better identify standards and use them to a greater extent. SMEs can also find the answers of all questions dealing with standardization and on how to participate in standards work.

The SME portal provides also information on how non-member SME could be granted access to the standardization process.

In 2015 the web-portal was updated with a link to the **SME e-Learning tool** developed by CEN and CENELEC, in cooperation with Small Business Standards (SBS), which is also translated into Bulgarian.