

## **First SBS Forum offers insights into Personal Protective Equipment and Textile Care standardisation for SMEs**

**Brussels, November 2018 – On November 7th 2018 Small Business Standards (SBS) held a Forum to discuss the needs of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the implementation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Textile Care legislation. The Forum was part of a stakeholder advocacy project from SBS, the German Textile Care Association (DTV) and the European association of SMEs that manufacture safety products (SME Safety). The initiative aimed to better understand and meet standardisation needs for SMEs that manufacture, distribute and maintain PPE or offer hygiene and sterilisation services for medical devices like reusable or textiles.**

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Yesterday 7 November, on the occasion of the first SBS Forum on PPE and Textile Care standardisation, the SBS sectoral associations DTV and SME Safety organised the first SBS Forum on PPE and Textile Care standardisation. Industry representatives, national SME associations, SMEs active in standardisation as well as representatives of the EU Commission and CEN-CENELEC discussed the contribution of European SMEs to the development of both European and international standards. All participants welcomed achievements such as the integration of the textile care sector as an officially acknowledged stakeholder among those affected by the PPE legislation and the contribution to the [new EC Guidelines for the implementation of the PPE regulation](#).

Nevertheless, institutional obstacles for SMEs to participate in standardisation activities remain. PPE manufacturers, textile care associations and members of the technical working groups in the standardisation bodies also expressed their concerns regarding the short time envisaged for the transition from the old legislative framework (the PPE Directive 89/686/EEC) to the new one (the PPE Regulation 2016/425/EU). The one-year period (ending on 21st April 2019) is insufficient to get the affected products recertified also due to the limited number of notified bodies that are responsible for product testing. Furthermore, industry representatives highlighted the lack of harmonised standards in support to the new Regulation, which causes severe consequences especially for SMEs since they do not have the resources to develop their own conformity assessment procedures.

To strengthen the representation of SMEs in the standardisation process, several national textile care associations agreed upon building a network and pool of European-wide exchange of information, positions and expertise. The objective is to provide the European SME community with technical expertise and relevant information when it comes to the implementation of the new legislative framework and standards in their daily business.

In the light of these challenges, SME Safety President Mr Alberto Spasciani and DTV Managing Director Mr Andreas Schumacher substantiated their plan to further institutionalise the collaboration

among national associations operating in the PPE and Textile Care sector. For that purpose, the associations presented a Memorandum of Understanding whose objectives are:

- a. spreading of information about ongoing legislation and standardisation in the field of PPE and Textile Care, e.g. the new PPE regulation (EU) 2016/425 and the new Medical Device Regulation (EU) 2017/745;
- b. feedback stimulation and gathering of input from the association's SME members;
- c. coordination of consensus-based positions on SME issues relevant to sectoral legislation and standardisation;
- d. content creation to inform members about newly published pieces of legislation and standards.

The Textile Care associations of the Czech Republic, United Kingdom, Belgium and Sweden were the first ones to voice their support to this initiative. In the coming month SBS, DTV and SME Safety will further promote the initiative aiming at gathering the interest of other national SME associations.

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**EDITORS' NOTES:** SME Safety is the European association of Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) that manufacture safety products. This press release is written in the framework of the 2018 Sectoral Approach of Small Business Standards (SBS) on PPE and Textile Care standardisation. SBS ([www.sbs-sme.eu](http://www.sbs-sme.eu)) is the association supporting European SMEs in standardisation and is co-financed by the European Commission and EFTA.

For more information, please contact SME Safety at [info@sme-safety.eu](mailto:info@sme-safety.eu).