



PRESS RELEASE

ECOS/SBS workshop confirms that there is an elephant in the room

Stakeholders gather to discuss effective and legitimate use of harmonised standards in European laws and policies

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On 12 June, ECOS and Small Business Standards, the organisations representing and defending environmental and SMEs' interests in standardisation organised a [workshop](#) entitled: "**The use of standards in policy: is there an elephant in the room?**", held at the European Economic and Social Committee in Brussels.

The workshop built on the landmark **ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), in the James Elliott case**, which for the first time acknowledged that harmonised European standards are part of EU law. It brought together policy-makers, experts and other stakeholders to discuss how to ensure an effective and legitimate use of harmonised standards in European laws and policies.

It was concluded that harmonised European standards are of value to businesses, policy-makers and society at large provided that sufficient institutional checks and balances are in place and the process is transparent and inclusive. Furthermore, inclusiveness implies ensuring the adequate representation and effective participation of SMEs and civil society organisations in the standards development process at national, European and international levels which, today, remain insufficient. The need for a better-quality control of standards, both content- and process-wise was also stressed.

"Despite accounting for over 99% of all companies, SMEs are today under-represented in the European Standardisation System. The outcome of James Elliot court case will lead to further transformations which should not have negative impacts on SMEs but on the contrary be subject to SME scrutiny which would lead to SME compatible standards" commented **Christel Davidson, SBS Director**.

Laura Degallaix, ECOS Director, added: "Harmonised standards can support legislation and policies; however, this requires trust and confidence in both the regulatory approach to standards, and the standardisation system and its outcomes. It is crucial that the CJEU ruling in the James Elliott case is not forgotten and that questions around institutional control, liabilities, and access to standards and standardisation work are ultimately addressed."

About ECOS

[ECOS](#) defends the environmental interests in the standards development process at European and international level. Its mission is to influence the development of ambitious strategies to reduce and control sources of environmental pollution, and to promote resource and energy efficiency, environmental health and sustainable development. ECOS is involved in over 60 technical committees within these organisations and participates, mainly through experts, in the standards development work.

About SBS

[Small Business Standards](#) (SBS) is a European non-profit association (aisbl) co-financed by the European Commission and EFTA Member States. Its goal is to represent and defend small and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) interests in the standardisation process at European and international levels. Moreover, it aims at raising the awareness of SMEs about the benefits of standards and at encouraging them to get involved in the standardisation process.

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For more information:

- [ECOS Position Paper: "The Use of Standards in Legislation and Policies"](#)
- [Visual Report from the workshop](#)
- [Workshop summary & conclusions](#)

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