Article 6 of EU Regulation 1025/2012 Annual Report 2019

SME

General

SMEs are a critical pillar of the Irish economy with approximately 250,000 active enterprises in Ireland in 2016, virtually all of them SMEs. Some 92% of enterprises had less than 10 employees (micro), 6.8% had between 10-49 employees (small), 1.2% had 50-249 employees (medium), and only 0.2% had 250 or more employees (large). SMEs account for as much as 56% of manufacturing employment and 74% of services employment in Ireland.

Almost 60% of Irish SMEs engage in innovation activities but only 6% trade internationally. The adoption, use and compliance with industry standards could help SMEs to increase quality, win contracts with foreign-owned multinationals, engage in e-commerce and develop their intellectual assets and innovation. However, there seems to be a lack of awareness among SMEs of the benefits of standards. NSAI has collaborated with skills providers to build innovation excellence programmes, with a focus on SMEs, using the newly published ISO standard ISO 56002 *Innovation Management System* as the framework for the course.

NSAI is working at increasing policy attention to the role that adopting and developing international standards can play in enhancing SME productivity which may incorporate standards adhesion in company SME programmes and enhanced treatment of standards in management development programmes.

NSAI has established 48 technical committees dealing with the following sectors of interest to Irish businesses:

- Accessibility,
- Building & Construction,
- Biotechnology
- Chemicals, Chemical Engineering & Food Products,
- Electrical Engineering,
- Electronic Engineering,
- Energy supply and distribution,
- Fundamental Measurement,

- Information and Communications Technology.
- Health, Cosmetics and Medical Equipment,
- Management Systems,
- Mechanical Engineering,
- Metallic Materials,
- Non-Metallic Materials,
- Products for Household & Leisure Use,
- Transport, Mechanical, Handling & Packaging, and
- Services,

Awareness and Promotion Initiatives

In order to promote the use of standards and provide greater access to the standardisation development process NSAI has developed an awareness strategy focused on key stakeholders and invested in ICT solutions where possible so as to facilitate those already engaged and to grow the number of participants from small and medium size businesses, and the research and innovation communities.

A dedicated web page for SMEs, the NSAI SME Portal, provides information about aspects of NSAI's standardisation work including the annual work programme and an open invitation to get involved in activities through participating in NSAI's standards committees. Membership of committees is open to all those with relevant interest without charge.

The online NSAI SME Portal also provides information to SMEs on the ISO Management System standards highlighting eh Practical Guides for Small Enterprises.

Launched in 2011 with the support of the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association and the Small Firms Association, NSAI's online Enquiry Portal 'Your Standards, Your Say' makes it easy for small and medium sized enterprises to engage in standardisation activities. This facility makes vital information on standards in development easily accessible and gives business and the public a chance to have their say on standards prior to them being finalised. A programme was put in place to significantly upgrade this facility and make it more user friendly.

Through their work NSAI standard officers develop national stakeholder networks and provide information on standard development and the benefits of participation in relevant areas including the advantages that

can accrued to businesses such as enhancing their competitiveness and creating the condition to be first in line to take advantage when market opportunities present.

Standards sales are web-based making it easy for businesses to search and purchase standards online. Abstracts of standards are available to view without charge for the Irish standards catalogue from 2008. The pricing structure is competitive with tariff options for purchase of multiple standards. In addition, a tailoring update service is available where businesses can, by payment of an annual charge, receive updates on standard revisions for view or automatic purchase.

All Irish standards can be viewed without charge by visiting our Head Office during working hours. In addition, the NSAI catalogue has also been made available through most of the University and Institute of Technology libraries.

Annually NSAI hosts and participates in a number of business and government sponsored events. The levels of involvement ranged from hosting and providing speakers to providing an information desk supplying brochures and answering questions relating to standards and standardisation activities.

NSAI has an ongoing media campaign on national radio and online newspapers highlighting the benefits of industry participation in standardization and advocated the use of certification to standards.

NSAI uses a number of IT tools and social media to promote standards. These include RSS feeds on the website which allow users to sign up to follow NSAI news and events; circulation of a quarterly e-zine to 14,000 registered interests; using the NSAI social media to disseminate information on NSAI activities.

NSAI participates in the CEN/CENELEC SME Working Group which focuses on the standardisation needs of SMEs.

NSAI operates an SME focused helpdesk where SMEs can address standards related queries directly to an NSAI staff member.