



A webinar in cooperation with Small Business Standards (SBS)



#Standards4SMEs

European Standardization Organizations

CEN-CENELEC Guide 17: Making Standards Work for SMEs

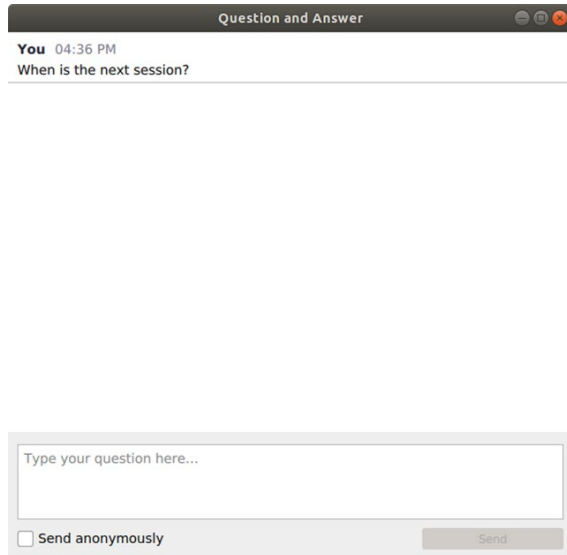
A deep-dive into CEN-CENELEC Guide 17 to address SMEs' needs in the standard development process



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- ▶ You are muted
- ▶ Use the Q&A panel to submit your questions



- ▶ This webinar is recorded
- ▶ Talk about us on X or LinkedIn: [#Standards4SMEs](#) [@Standards4EU](#) & [@SMS SME](#)

Your speakers today



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Today's agenda



- ▶ **Why** are SME-friendly standards important, for SMEs and for all?
- ▶ **Who** can help ensure standards are fit for all? *Spoiler: YOU!*
- ▶ **How** can you apply the SME Standardization Guide?
- ▶ **What** do SME-friendly standards look like?
- ▶ We want to hear **from you:** Feedback and Q&As

Why are SME-friendly standards important

SMEs make up the large majority of businesses in every country in the world, and are present across most sectors

SMEs rely on – or must apply – standards but do not have as many resources as other stakeholders in the standardization process

Standards that reflect everyone's interests are more likely to be widely adopted

Such inclusive Standards make for stronger SMEs and further support a robust economy

For a more inclusive, open, and transparent standardization system, it is key to ensure SMEs' interests are considered in the drafting process – even when SMEs are not in the room

Why are SME-friendly standards important?

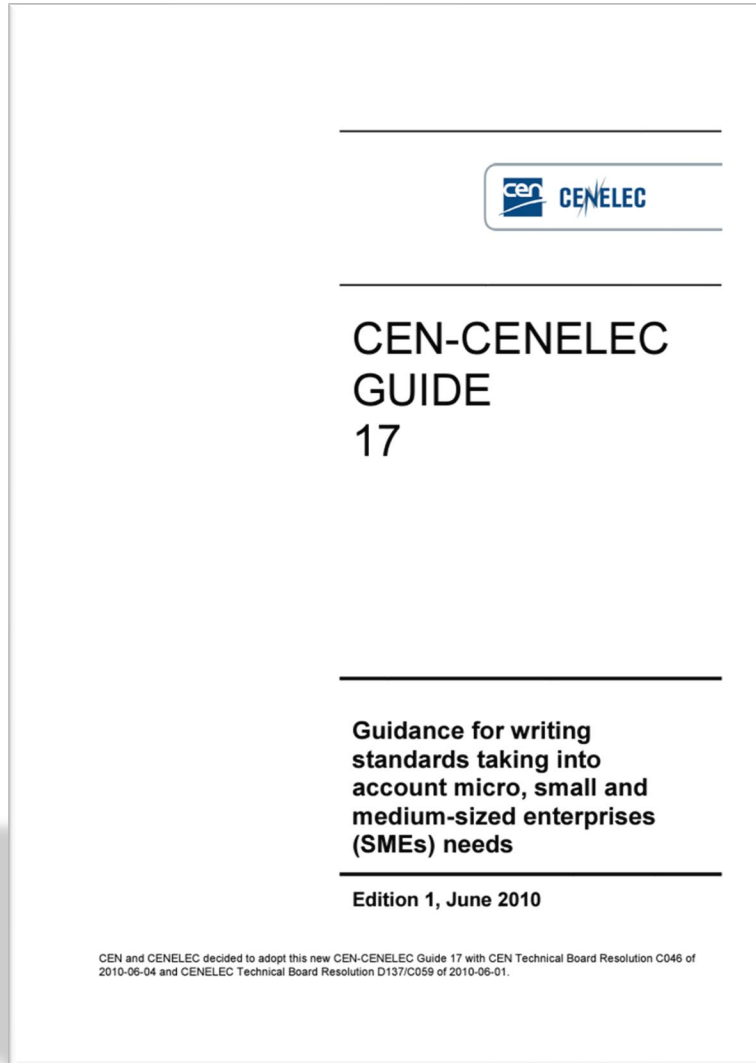
The impact of a SME-compatible standard on a small or medium business can be very successful

- ▶ *Reduce unnecessary costs*
- ▶ *Foster innovation*
- ▶ *Strengthen competitiveness*
- ▶ *Enable environmental compliance and adoption of new technologies*
- ▶ *Improve business outcomes*
- ▶ *Expand market access*
- ▶ *...*

→ **Impact on European competitiveness**

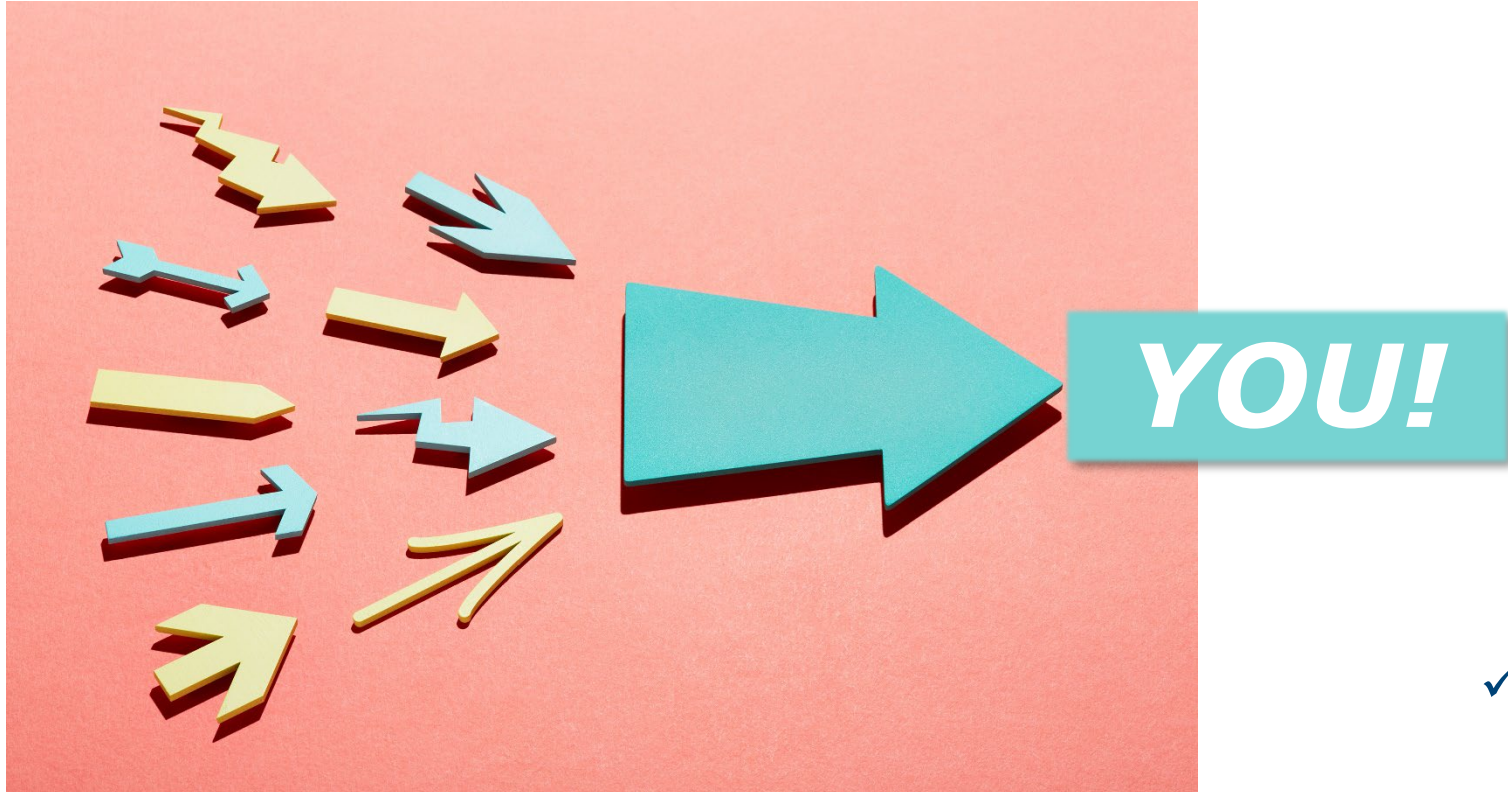
→ Standards that work for SMEs benefit everyone

The **SME STANDARDIZATION GUIDE**



- **CEN-CENELEC Guide 17** - *'Guidance for writing standards taking into account micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) needs'*
- First edition published in 2010, as a joint initiative with CEN-CENELEC SME-WG & SBS
- [Here](#), available in 27 languages
- Taken up as ISO-IEC Guide 17 in 2016
- Provides **guidance, advice, recommendations** to standard-drafters, technical experts, and NSBs/NCs Staff, to develop **standards that are understandable and implementable by SMEs**
- Relevant for **all TCs at national, European and international levels**

Who can help ensure standards are fit for all kinds of businesses



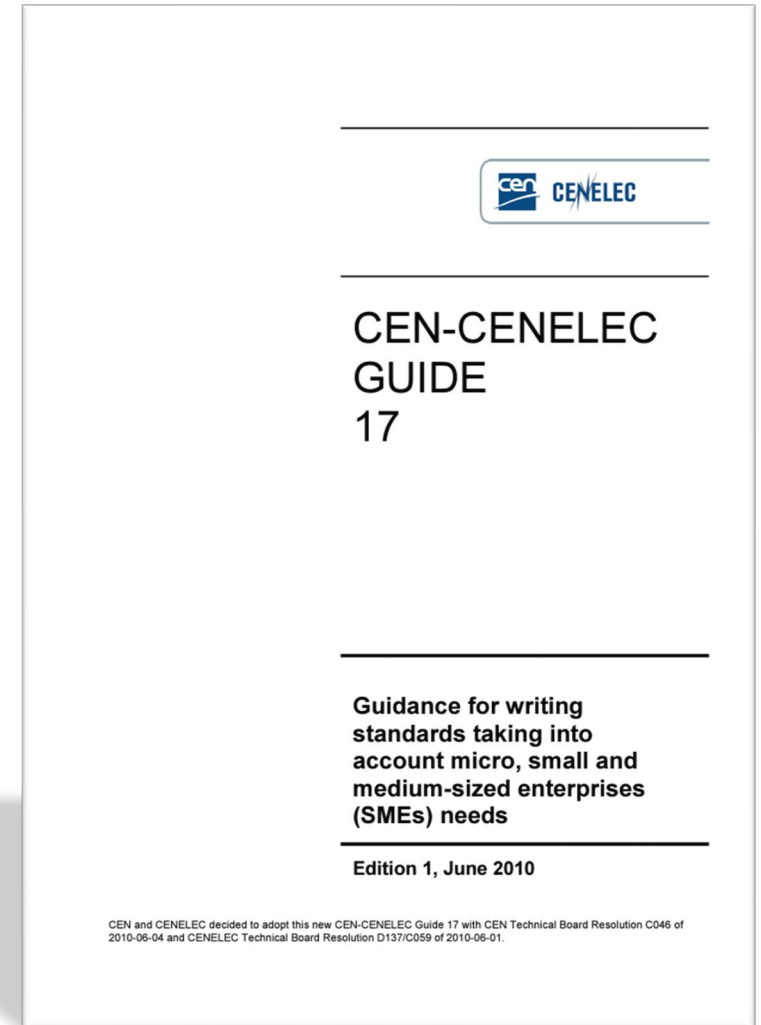
- ✓ ***Use any occasion to proactively reach out to***
 - ❖ *SMEs*
 - ❖ *SME associations**to participate in your TCs/WGs*

- ✓ ***Use Guide 17*** *in your TCs/WGs (we'll show you how now)*

What does the Guide look like?

Table of content of Guide 17

- Foreword
- Introduction
- 1. Scope
- 2. Normative references
- 3. Terms and definitions
- 4. General considerations
- 5. Issues to consider during the standards development process
- 6. Guide checklist



SCOPE



- ▶ Guide aims to provide guidance to writers of European Standards on the **specific needs of SMEs to avoid their exclusion from the market and distortion of fair competition**
- ▶ Guide is **relevant to all actors** involved in Standardization, **at all levels** of the System
- ▶ Not all principles in the Guide necessarily must be applied to all standards → **TCs and WGs are in a better position to evaluate how to address** the specific needs of SMEs in their standards.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS



- ▶ Ensure that standards are **understandable** by all users, including SMEs
 - ▶ Understandable terminology & language
- ▶ Consider possible different **business models** and **diverging interests** of all stakeholders **throughout the value-chain** of the product or service, including **SME-specific interests**
 - ▶ Manufacturers, suppliers, consultants, research laboratories, certifiers, testing facilities, etc.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER DURING THE STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS



- ▶ From the preparation of a New Work Item (NWI) to the Implementation of a standard
- ▶ Guide helps you **identify what SME-specific issues** might arise at each stage and **how to counter-balance them**



▶ *Let's deep-dive into how to do this!*

How can you apply the SME Standardization Guide

Preparation of a New Work Item



Market relevance

- ▶ Consult all stakeholders (including SMEs) to assess the need for/ interest in the standard, e.g. through their associations
- ▶ Specify the market needs, including the relevance of the standard for SMEs

Stakeholders

- ▶ Assess if the project impact the SMEs
- ▶ If this is the case highlight it in the new work item proposal

TIP: Make sure to fill-in stakeholder impact sections in the [CEN/CLC NWI Proposal Forms](#)
OR in the [ISO/IEC NWIP Forms](#)

| 7. Stakeholder categories immediately affected by the proposal | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industry and commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Societal consumer groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Standards application |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SMEs | <input type="checkbox"/> Labour | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-governmental organization (NGO) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Academic and research bodies | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental stakeholders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consumers | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None of the above categories | | |

Preparation of a Standard

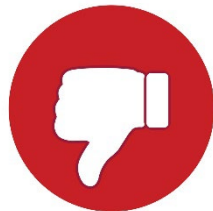


- ▶ Consider the **costs of investment and training** required for the implementation of a standard
 - ▶ *Consequence of change of technology?*
 - ▶ *Additional costs for buying new equipment, testing method, hiring consultants, training,...?*
- ▶ Consider the **availability of required elements**
 - ▶ Avoid provisions or requirements that may put disproportionate or unnecessary constraints on SMEs or that may not be cost-effective in all situations
 - ▶ Necessary elements should be available on the market & easily accessible (including national markets)

Example of a non-SME compatible requirement

Previous version of the ISO 9001 standard required:

- ▶ “The organization shall (...) provide training or take other actions to satisfy the needs for the necessary competence for personnel performing work affecting product quality”
- ▶ Irrelevant for a **one-person SME**



Had the wording been:



- ▶ “If product quality might be affected by a lack of training, then the organization shall provide training or take other actions (...)”
- ▶ One-person SME could **fully comply** with the standard
- ▶ **No effect** on the obligation on larger organizations to provide appropriate training

How can you apply the SME Standardization Guide

Developing the content of the standard



- ▶ Add **examples and explanations** to improve the understanding and use of the standard
- ▶ Provide an **introduction with supportive information**: reason for standard's creation/modification, type of business/activities covered by the standard, range of products/services, targeted stakeholders for standards use
- ▶ Make standards **precise and complete** within their **scope**
- ▶ Avoid imposing costly and **complex testing regimes** and consider the **frequency** of testing: measuring equipment, staff training, time & resources
- ▶ Identify **simple and cost-effective ways of verifying conformity** with the requirements or Provide alternative verification methods when possible

What do SME-friendly standards look like



- ▶ **EN 13697:2023, Chemical disinfectants and antiseptics** - Quantitative non-porous surface test for the evaluation of bactericidal and yeasticidal and/or fungicidal activity of chemical disinfectants used in food, industrial, domestic and institutional areas without mechanical action [...]
- ▶ Fully applicable for SMEs thanks to its **clear scope, economics test procedure** and **comprehensible description** on how to implement it

How can you apply the SME Standardization Guide

Structure & Presentation of the content of the standard



- ▶ Follow **user-friendliness** as guiding principle
- ▶ Keep the standards as **short** as possible: split into separate parts if too long
- ▶ **Clear, logical, easy-to-follow** as possible: keep it easily readable by the intended audience
- ▶ Include supportive **charts, drawings,** and representative **examples** of applications
- ▶ Reduce the need to acquire **referenced standards**

How can you apply the SME Standardization Guide

Structure & Presentation of the content of the standard



- ▶ Use a **simple and clear language** to be understood by all the expected standard users, also those who have not been involved in its preparation:
 - ▶ *Verbs in the active voice*
 - ▶ *Simple and meaningful words*
 - ▶ *Be assertive by using commands*
 - ▶ *Action verbs rather than abstract nouns*
 - ▶ *Speak directly to the users rather than saying what they might do*
 - ▶ *List where appropriate*
 - ▶ *Define technical terms and abbreviations*
 - ▶ *Use terms consistently throughout the text*

What do SME-friendly standards look like

- ▶ **EN ISO 2411, Rubber- or plastics-coated fabrics** - Determination of coating adhesion (ISO/DIS 2411:2023)
- ▶ **Specifies** a method of determining the coating adhesion strength of coated fabrics
- ▶ Throughout its development, terms related to the test methods have been made **simple** and **alternative adequate methods** were provided so that SMEs may easily implement it
- ▶ Drafted in a **clear, and unambiguous language** which is easy to understand and makes it easy for SMEs to apply



How can you apply the SME Standardization Guide

Review



- ▶ In case of **revision**, ensure that **clear information on the changes** made to a previous version is provided in the new and revised standards, incl. the publication date of the revision
- ▶ Assess the **implications of changes** resulting from new and revised standards → set an **adequate transition period**, taking into account the changes
- ▶ Foster supportive **assistance for the implementation** of standards that cannot be simplified. Alternatively, create additional guidance

How can you apply the SME Standardization Guide

CHECKLIST



- ▶ Referring to several sections of the Guide → **22 questions**
- ▶ Helps you **check if major elements that help SMEs easily implement a standards have been taken into account**

| Preparation of the New Work Item | Preparation of a standard | Development of the content | Structure and presentation of the content | Final review |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (5.2.1) Have you checked the SME relevance of the standard? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.2.2) Have you checked among all the stakeholders if there are special SMEs needs? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.2.2) Did you evaluate if SMEs are among the target groups? | <input type="checkbox"/> (5.3.1) Did you evaluate the costs of investment (technology, equipment, testing)? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.3.1) Did you evaluate the cost of training (staff)? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.3.1) Did you evaluate the costs of implementation? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.3.2) Have you verified that all elements are available? | <input type="checkbox"/> (5.4.1) If the performance approach is used, is it understandable? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.4.2) Have you used descriptive explanations? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.4.3) Is the standard precise and complete within its scope? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.4.4) Did you avoid strict testing regimes? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.4.4) Did you evaluate the cost of testing? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.4.5) Have you identified simple and cost-effective ways of verifying conformity with the requirements? | <input type="checkbox"/> (5.5.1) Is the standard as short as possible? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.5.1) If the standard is long, did you evaluate the possibility of dividing it in shorter standards? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.5.2) Is the structure of the standard easy to follow? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.5.3) Have you included supportive graphs, charts, etc (when possible)? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.5.4) Have you used clear language understandable by all expected standard users? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.5.5) Did you minimise the number of referenced standards? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.5.6) Did you provide clear information on the changes from the previous versions of the standard? | <input type="checkbox"/> (5.6.1) Have you suggested a transition period reflecting the implications of changes? <input type="checkbox"/> (5.6.2) Have you made the evaluation on the need for an implementation manual? |

SME Compatibility test for standards



Provide an overall perception of the SME compatibility of any given standard



Based on Guide 17



Rank into broad categories (good, average and poor standards)



Starting point for possible improvement of standards



<https://sbs-sme.eu/tools/sme-compatibility-tests/>

SME Compatibility test - Criteria



- ✓ Justification, target group and relation with other standards
- ✓ Scope
- ✓ Normative references
- ✓ Market access
- ✓ Relevance of the content
- ✓ Cost (requirements) & conformity assessment

- ✓ Readability
- ✓ Availability of guidance
- ✓ Necessary modifications before applying the standard
- ✓ Availability of external elements for implementation
- ✓ Appropriate transition period

SME Compatibility test - Result



0 - 33%

The standard is poor & causes substantial challenges for SMEs. It requires urgent/fundamental improvement.



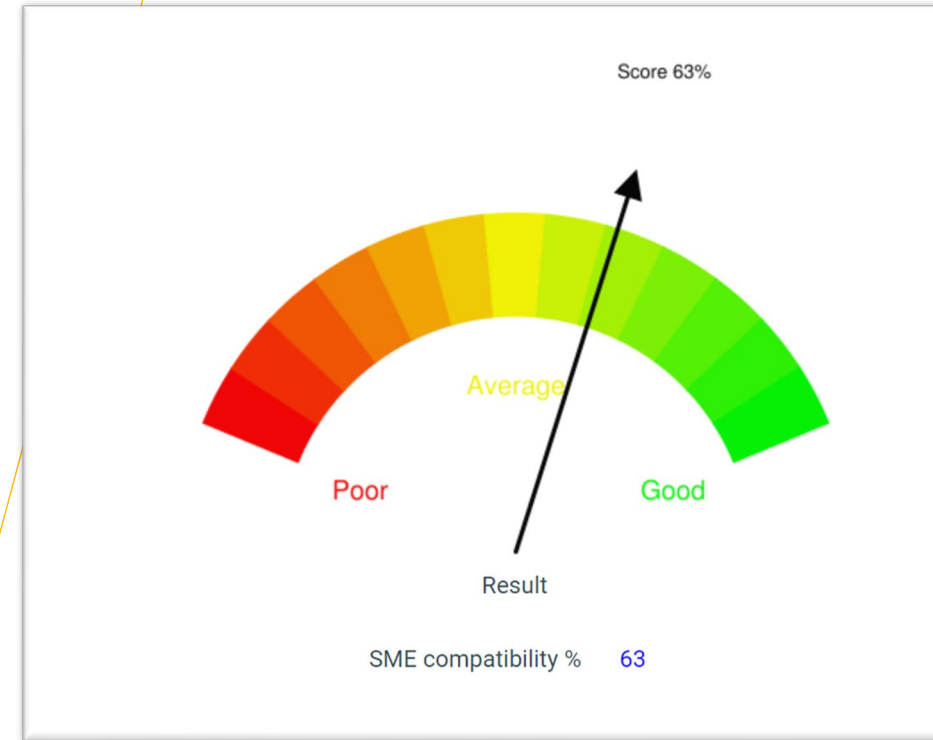
34 - 66%

The standard is average in relation to compatibility with SME's needs. It should be improved.



67 - 100%

The standard is good & compatible with SMEs' needs in general. It requires little or no change



How can you apply the SME Standardization Guide

Other supporting tools

- ▶ **SBS Compatibility Test; find [here](#)**
- ▶ **Your national SME Contact point; find [here](#)**

We want to hear **from you!**



- ▶ As standard-drafters, and Guide-users, **help us identify:**
 - ▶ *What could be improved?*
 - ▶ *Is there a key element missing?*
 - ▶ *What do you need to be able to promote & use it more in your TCs/WGs?*
 - ▶ *How can the use of Guide 17 become more systematic in the standard-drafting process?*
 - ▶ *For those we have used the Guide 17, have you encountered any issues?*
- ▶ **Do you have any questions?**

Let's make standards for SMEs!



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