



Commonwealth Standards Network: April 2019 update

1. **Background:**

The Commonwealth Standards Network (CSN) aims to tackle non-tariff barriers and promote strong trade amongst all Commonwealth states through the participation, adoption and implementation of international standards.

For more information, please see <https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/about-bsi/uk-national-standards-body/commonwealth-standards-network/>, or contact the CSN Programme Manager Ben Hedley: ben.hedley@bsigroup.com.

2. **CSN Outputs:**

a. **Online Platform & content:**

An online collaborative platform will encourage collaboration between NSBs throughout the Commonwealth, to support information exchange and peer to peer learning and support. The following platform functions have been proposed:

- Information repository;
- Event directory;
- Framework of International Standards;
- Toolkit;
- Member directory;
- Discussion forum;
- Member news/blogs;
- **Export Hub.***

***Export Hub proposal** (sent to CSN for comment in January 2019)

"The use of international standards is an efficient way for companies to trade throughout the Commonwealth by demonstrating that their products and services meet the expectations accepted by the markets in which they will be consumed. Companies need to know which relevant international standards have been adopted across the Commonwealth, but this information is not readily available to them; the CSN proposes to solve this by delivering an 'Export Hub' tool that will allow a company to search which international standards have been adopted by Commonwealth Countries.

The Export Hub will host searchable data on Commonwealth national adoptions of international standards. This information could be provided to the Export Hub via automated digital feeds where appropriate, or by NSBs informing the CSN Programme Manager directly. The search functions and level of detail presented by the Export Hub will be established as CSN user feedback is gathered and user testing takes place."

Summary of CSN feedback on the Export Hub proposal:

1. Are you approached by exporters/ potential exporters seeking to trade internationally?
And, do companies and stakeholders contact you to establish what standards are used in potential export markets?



- Most of the Commonwealth NSBs that responded are approached by firms that are seeking to trade/increase trade internationally;
 - There is a split between developed economies and developing economies; developed economies are approached by companies seeking to understand the standards on a very infrequent basis, whereas developing economies appear to have more requests coming from companies within their countries. This is probably because more information is available in developed economies through Government and trade promotion agencies. Where there is limited support infrastructure then NSBs (that are often part of a government trade department) are contacted more by companies and exporters to identify the standards needed in each market.
2. Do you have a mechanism to provide this information, and if so what is the mechanism?
- The mechanisms varied, a number of the respondents run their nations WTO TBT enquiry point, but it appears that the majority of request processing is manual, whereby a request is received and a manual search is conducted and a response provided.
3. Do you see potential exporters in your country benefiting from such a tool? And, would the Export Hub be useful to you and your stakeholders?
- The responses were positive with most NSBs stating that they see that the tool would be beneficial.
4. Would you promote it to your stakeholders?
- All responses were positive.
5. Do you have data on national adoptions of international standards?
- Many do have this information, though these details are not kept in a common format.
6. Do you have any additional suggestions or questions?
- There will be challenges with just the adoption of international standards as there can be national adoptions with modifications, there are also regulatory (mandatory) requirements that sit alongside standards and the hub should consider domestic standards.
 - It was also noted that some NSBs would like to receive capacity building and technical assistance to support the development of National Quality Infrastructure, and others offered support the delivery of CSN international training activity.

Export Hub conclusions:

- The development and delivery of an export hub would benefit exporters in their countries, however:
 - There are complexities related to the regulatory landscape;
 - The system would have to provide users with accurate information on standards adopted (correct information, up to date);
 - Companies would benefit from both information on standards that had been adopted, national standards in each country and regulatory requirements;



- Reporting of international standards adoptions across the Commonwealth is sometimes not available or inaccurate;
- Currently, the data available is not accurate enough to deliver a product that would give a user an accurate view of which international standards have been adopted in Commonwealth countries.
- Considering the feedback and findings the Export Hub proposal has been revised for 2019 as follows:
 - The digital platform will host details of national enquiry points and Government Departments;
 - CSN members will be supported and encouraged to better report the standards that they are adopting, to ISO and IEC;
 - CSN members and other stakeholder will be engaged to gain their input on the development of an associated platform when accurate data becomes available.

b. Training and Workshops:

- **10x in-country NSB Training programmes** will be delivered to eligible NSBs to support the development of their NSB standardization strategies and participation in international standards development and adoption of international standards.
- **20x in-country stakeholder workshops** will be delivered to stakeholders to increase the visibility and understanding of the benefits that international standards can bring to support the development and export potential of organisations in ODA eligible countries.

The following sessions have taken place:

Date	Location	Type	Attendance	Focus/notes
2019/02/13-14	Accra, Ghana	NSB Training (GSA)	>40	Standardization strategy, participation in international standards development, adoption of international standards, international standards to support regulation, WTO TBT. TBT notification strategy.
2019/02/15	Accra, Ghana	Stakeholder workshop	>40	Benefits of international standards.
2019/03/21-21	Nairobi, Kenya	NSB Training (KEBS)	100	Standardization strategy, participation in international standards development, adoption of international standards, international standards to support regulation, WTO TBT. Regulations/standards setting strategy.
2019/03/22	Nairobi, Kenya	Stakeholder workshop	>60	Benefits of international standards.

Forthcoming sessions:

Date	Location	Type	Attendance	Notes
2019/04/24-25	Georgetown, Guyana	NSB Training (GSA)	Approx. 40 (TBC)	Development and use of international standards, using international standards to support regulation.
2019/04/26	Georgetown, Guyana	Stakeholder workshop	Approx. 20 (TBC)	Benefits of international standards.
2019/03/21-21	Cartagena, Colombia	Stakeholder workshop	TBC	CSN event at COPANT meetings.



Eligible NSBs that have signed-up to the CSN will be contacted with more detailed information regarding the in-country Training and Workshop programmes that will take place through to February 2020.

c. Technical Assistance:

Five in-country Technical Assistance programmes are running from October 2018 to April 2020 to address specific institutional capacity constraints, enabling them to use international standards and participate in the international standards development process.

- The **Africa** technical assistance programme focuses on providing standards-related technical assistance to two countries – **Uganda** and **Zambia**. In both countries the prime beneficiary is the NSB, namely the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) and the Zambia Bureau of Standards (ZABS). In addition, the CSN programme attempts to stimulate interest in and demand for the quality infrastructure services of these NSBs among the MSME sector. The underlying ethos of this approach being that by uplifting small businesses - for example small agricultural producers - there will be a triple benefit in that producers will offer better products, increasing their ability to market and sell these; while stimulating demand for conformity assessment activities supporting the sustainability of the NSBs involved.
- The **Caribbean** technical assistance programme focuses on providing standards-related technical assistance to **St Lucia**. The strategy for the Saint Lucia Bureau of Standards (SLBS) is to address the limitations identified during the inception phase and improve and develop its services related to Saint Lucia's economic operators and economy by improving its standardisation practices, certification skills, marketing and communication skills and strengthening its level of engagement on standards awareness and metrology calibration capabilities.
- The objective of the **Oceania** technical assistance programme is to contribute to the removal of technical barriers to trade between **Papua New Guinea** (PNG), **Vanuatu**, and their trading partners (particularly other Commonwealth Member States) to ensure the free movement of goods between the parties. The main expected result is to strengthen the institutional frameworks and quality infrastructure of PNG and Vanuatu to enable better implementation of best practices facilitating the free movement of goods and services.

3. Join the CSN:

There are no fees to join the CSN which is a collaborative network open to Commonwealth states and regional associations. To find out more about the network and/or membership, please contact the CSN Programme Manager Ben Hedley: ben.hedley@bsigroup.com.