



Joint statement

The strategic value of
international standards for the
UK as a global trading nation

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The strategic value of international standards for the UK as a global trading nation

BSI and its stakeholders offer three recommendations to government to enhance trade policy through the strategic use of international standards. We welcome the opportunity to work closely with government to inform and advise on the effective use of international standards in trade agreements that will maximise opportunities for the whole of the UK.

Standards are an invaluable tool to boost the UK's advantage. Research¹ shows the use of standards in the UK enables an additional £6.1bn in exports annually and nearly 40% of UK productivity growth.

The success of the UK as a global trading nation depends on competitive access to global markets, assuring the confidence of consumers and minimising technical barriers to trade. International standards created through ISO² and IEC³ are a passport to trade, reducing trade friction and enabling better business practice while strengthening consumer protection.

International standards are a cornerstone of the WTO rules-based trading system, helping to create a common language for good practice between trading partners, delivering confidence in products and services and facilitating regulatory compliance in many countries. UK expert representatives shape the conditions of market access globally by leading the development of international standards.

Within the international system, UK experts play a prominent role in the European regional standards area, through national membership of the independent associations, CEN⁴ and CENELEC⁵. European standards are aligned with international standards and simplify market access in all 34 member countries.

UK leadership in the international standards system⁶ is a strategic asset for UK trade policy, a pillar of UK soft power and can underpin upcoming trade negotiations. BSI and its stakeholders across business, trade associations, professional institutions, consumer groups and academia can bring deep domain knowledge and expertise to the government Expert Trade Advisory Groups.

Knowing how standards are used in target markets will help to provide clear and robust negotiating positions. We can unlock the potential of the UK's leadership in this area by reaching agreement on the use of international standards in trade deals.

We recommend that government:

1. Make full use of the strategic national value of the UK's role in the international standards system comprising ISO and IEC and the European regional organizations.
2. Ensure that representative organizations are included in the Expert Trade Advisory Groups and the consultation process to support the development of trade policy and trade deals.
3. Involve BSI, as the national standards body, in the development of negotiating objectives related to technical barriers to trade and in the negotiation of trade deals.

1. CEBR, The Economic Contribution of Standards of the UK Economy (2015), published by BSI, research funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
 2. ISO, International Standards Organization
 3. IEC, International Electrotechnical Commission

4. CEN, European Committee for Standardization
 5. CENELEC, European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization
 6. The UK has more participating members in ISO committees than any other country



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