



European Office of Crafts, Trades and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises for Standardisation
Bureau Européen de l'Artisanat et des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises pour la Normalisation
Europäisches Büro des Handwerks und der Klein- und Mittelbetriebe für die Normung

Small Enterprises in view of the new Quality Management Standards ISO 9001, 9004, horizon 2008

The international standards for Quality Management Systems (QMS) have been renewed in the year 2000 and they are now under review that will bring an improved system by the year 2008.

The ISO Technical Committee 176 is already working on the drafts of the new standards expected to become effective in 2008. The last meeting was held in Bucharest in October 2003. The new QMS aims to address the concerns of the most advanced enterprises for “Business Excellence”. It will include, beyond the customer satisfaction that is the basis of the ISO 9001: 2000 standard, the dimension of **“sustainable growth based on learning and innovation”**. The tabled drafts come from official documents published by the Japanese Ministry of the Economy Trade and Industry. They are based on a survey of 520 Japanese companies and of 10 excellent overseas companies. Obviously **the needs of the large and most advanced companies have been taken into account**.

The degree of “Business Excellence” will be evaluated at five levels of maturity of which the ISO 9001 certification will be level 2. Three new levels of excellence above ISO 9001 are introduced.

Another planned feature of the new QMS is the **correction of the excesses of “a certain number of certification bodies, which acted without integrity”**. This problem of the existing system has been heavily criticised and it will be corrected through promised changes in the accreditation / certification system. NORMAPME has also denounced the continued issue of ISO certificates based on the 1994 series of standards.

The planned **changes will leave Small Enterprises further behind large companies in competitive terms by excluding them from a very complex technical system.** NORMAPME's warnings have been registered but sustained action in contributing proposed solutions adapted to Small Enterprises' needs is required. The absence of such intervention by SMEs in the previous rounds of ISO 9000 negotiations has resulted in a large gap between large and small companies. **The gap will further widen if no action is taken this time.**

The European economy heavily depends on the SME input and any loss of competitiveness of SMEs will result in further **loss of ground for Europe versus the other big economies** that are less SME dependent. Instead of closing the gap by 2010 we risk to enlarge it.

NORMAPME represents the interests of 12 Million European SMEs in standardisation with 50 Million employees.

NORMAPME has gained the institutional place needed to defend the interests of Small Enterprises in standardisation. Facing strong industrial and governmental organisations (US, Japan) that work to satisfy the needs of the most advanced large companies, requires equivalent effort on our side.

In the present situation NORMAPME is in urgent need of **significantly higher financial means** that will allow bringing together a strong professional team of experts. It can then contribute the necessary methodologies, texts, negotiation skills and information diffusion to achieve bringing SMEs into the new era of Quality Management and competitiveness. **European Governments should react immediately to avoid new loss of ground.**