All-Party Parliamentary Group on Artificial Intelligence

Evidence Meeting 7 – Next Steps

Monday, 5 November 2018 | 5:30-7:00 PM - Committee Room 4A, House of Lords

Scott Steedman, Director of Standards, BSI

Scott Steedman joined the BSI Group in January 2012 and was appointed to the Board in October 2012. An engineer by background, he started his career at the University of Cambridge before moving to industry where he spent over 20 years as a consultant working in the Built Environment sector. He was a Non-Executive Board Member of the Port of London Authority from 2009 to 2015 and served as Vice-President (Policy) for the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) from 2013 to 2017. He is currently Vice-President (Policy) of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

BSI is appointed by HMG as the National Standards Body, providing the infrastructure for UK experts to participate in international, European and national standards development, managing the catalogue of industry standards needed for the UK economy, and representing industry, government and society, reflecting the public policy interest.

Comment is invited on the three interconnected areas of "international rules, norms and standards". BSI's work as the UK standards organisation supports all these tools by offering WTO compliant standards that can be used to underpin regulation, to support performance based co-regulatory approaches and to provide opportunity for organisations to deliver aspirational performance independently of regulation.

BSI's policy is to approach standards in the same way as BSI's stakeholders, prioritising international standards first, then regional and then national.

BSI standards are developed in accordance with international rules, meeting the objectives of the WTO's "Technical Barriers to Trade" Agreement and WTO principles of open public consultation, stakeholder engagement and consensus.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a developing area of strategic importance to the UK where there is a widely recognised need for standards.

There has been widespread recognition of the need for standards in AI ethics before the technology becomes ubiquitous.

BSI and the US organisation IEEE are working together as the driving force behind the 'OCEANIS' initiative (Open Community for Ethics in Autonomous and Intelligent Systems). BSI is one of 12 founder members (which are all National Standards Bodies or Standards Development Organisations, such as IEEE). The members will use OCEANIS to provide a high level global forum for discussion, debate and collaboration for organizations interested in the development and use of standards to further the development of autonomous and intelligent systems, with a focus on ethics.

In various fora there have been numerous areas identified where there is a need for standards: aiding regulatory compliance in healthcare, safety, bias, privacy, etc. Ultimately, BSI as the UK standards organisation is here to take the areas where government, industry and consumers (as stakeholders together) need to develop consensus standards and ensure the mechanisms are in place for that to happen.

Given the global nature of technology development the goal for all participants is international standardisation which incorporates the views of the widest range of stakeholders and has international recognition. Practically, given the speed of change and the potential societal impact of AI, there is a need to develop and pilot standards at the European and national level that can meet short term needs and become base documents for international standards in due course. One such example of a national activity is the British Standard 'Robots and robotic devices, Guide to the ethical design and application of robots and robotic systems', published in 2016.

The UK government has been praised for the approach taken in the AI Sector Deal and for driving the role of bodies such as the Alan Turing Institute and the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation. That said, more needs to be done if the UK is to assert leadership in AI standards.

In terms of the "practical steps" that government can take when it comes to standards HMG needs to get involved directly with the wider stakeholder community already engaged in this work, to bring their interests in regulatory policy for AI to the standards community. As it has already done in other sectors, if HMG sees global standards' leadership as being an important part of UK leadership in aspects of AI such as governance and public acceptance, government needs to invest to develop standards that will be trail-blazing through a strategy and roadmap that the community can endorse.