

**ISS and SMEs in 2022 – Report on ISS activities during 2022 to facilitate SMEs participation
in the standardization process**

Belgrade, January 2023

Introduction

2022 has proven to be even more challenging and demanding than the previous years marked by the global COVID 19 pandemic. The people, business communities around the world, even the nature and our planet needed to recuperate, recover and catch up fast with the pace leading to sustainability and progress. All of us should make an effort to contribute to the global partnership in fulfilling the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) as the true way to instigate economic growth, improve health and education, reduce inequality while tackling climate change.

This Report outlines how ISS, as the National Standards Body of the Republic of Serbia, has fulfilled the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Regulation on Standardization 1025/2012 during 2021. This Article requires all EU National Standards Bodies (NSBs) to provide annual reports on how they have “encouraged and facilitated the access of SMEs¹ to standards and standards development processes” and how they have exchanged best practices on SME participation with other EU NSBs.

Taking into consideration that the Republic of Serbia is in the accession process with EU, the provisions of the EU Regulation on Standardization 1025/2012 have been integrated in the Law on Standardization (“Official Gazette of RS”, No.36/2009 and 46/2015), Decision amending the Founding Act of the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 27/2016), as well as the Statute of the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 29/2017).

ISS activities in 2022

ISS maintained already established and further expanded cooperation with SMEs, through performing previous activities and services, but also refreshed, improved, designed and implemented new activities and ways of collaborative work with SMEs.

I News in 2022

- Improved ISS website

In the first quarter of 2020, ISS launched the new, refreshed and more user-friendly website that offered overall more data and easier access to the texts of standards drafts, as well as the possibility to send online comments on the texts of the standards that are on public enquiry. In addition, we significantly improved the search function, updated the part of the website containing search and overall data on technical regulations and their link to national standards, in the part dedicated the terminology database the number of terms and definitions was increased 1423.

- New portal on ISS website

Most importantly, ISS opened the “Construction products portal”, which provides information on regulations and standards for trading products on the domestic and single European market. It is intended for manufacturers who belong primarily to small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as distributors, importers and other experts and users involved in the process of standardization,

¹ Small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurs (SMEs) represent an important segment of Serbian industry: 99,8% of all active companies are SMEs, they employ nearly 2/3 employees in the non-financial sector and participate with 32% in the Serbian GDP.

conformity assessment, testing and approval of products. The development of the Portal was realized within the framework of the implementation of the Czech program for the development of cooperation “Support for the Improvement and Development of Serbian Quality Infrastructure Sector” in cooperation between the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS) and Czech Office for Standards, Metrology and Testing (ÚNMZ).

All these improvements of the ISS web site were resulted in well established open communication with our customers, ISS NTC members, standards buyers, participants in the seminars and trainings, and especially SME representatives who represent the majority in all mentioned categories.

- Free of charge publications published in Serbian and/or translated in Serbian

Each year ISS offers to its customers a large number of new publications (some are free of charge). Free of charge publications are available for download from ISS web site, while other publications can be ordered and purchased.

1) ISS Bulletin "Standardization"

As in 2021, ISS continued with the quarterly publication of the "Standardization" Bulletin. The topics covered in all 4 issues range from the trend of digitalization and the development of standards in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), the participation of women in the activities of national standardization, the importance of standards in the European market, standards in education, that is, significant standards in this area, as well as on the importance of familiarizing students with the process of standards development and the benefits of their application, Serbian standards and women's entrepreneurship, new IEC mapping platform, and many others.

2) Interactive publication about BIM standardization

Within the cooperation of ISS with the Czech standards body – Czech Office for Standards, Metrology and Testing (ÚNMZ), several activities were carried out.

The documents CEN/TR 17439:2021, *Guidelines for the application of EN ISO 19650-1 and EN ISO 19650-2 in Europe* and EN ISO 23387, *Building information modelling (BIM) - Data templates for construction objects used in the life cycle of built assets - Concepts and principles*, have been translated and adopted into the national standardization system, a two-day webinar “Benchmarking on digital transformation based on BIM technology in the Czech Republic” was held with experts from the Czech Republic, as well as a webinar on the application of BIM technology in the organization, where an interactive publication “Introduction of BIM in the organization” translated from Czech to Serbian was presented as part of the project.

3) „Research regarding the use of standards and their impact on the business activities of the companies in the Republic of Serbia“

The above mentioned project also supported research on the use of standards and their impact on business in the Republic of Serbia, published in a separate publication and in electronic form. It is the first research in the field of application of standards in organizations in the Republic of Serbia and provided data on the reasons why an organization uses standards, the costs associated with it, the level of knowledge of standards, especially standards from the field of different management systems, as well as the possible participation of organizations in the process of standardization and

the process of adoption of standards. The idea and inspiration for carrying out such research came from the similar research done by the "Bureau voor Normalisatie/Bureau de Normalisation" the Belgian national standards body.

There were 197 participating companies who provided data for the „Research regarding the use of standards and their impact on the business activities of the companies in the Republic of Serbia“. The largest number of the companies originated from the large companies sector, but also a few from the SME sector.

- **4 Serbian SMEs presented on CEN and CENELEC website dedicated webpage for SMEs & Standards**

The part of the CEN-CENELEC web site and especially the dedicated webpage for SMEs, which was announced on ISS web site, shows 4 Serbian SMEs that are now presented on the CEN and CENELEC website dedicated webpage for SMEs & Standards, i.e.:

- 1) Elkont Engineering in the field of lifts, escalators and moving walks,
- 2) ENSACO Solutions in the fields of: power systems management and measuring relays,
- 3) PROFI LAB in the field of laboratory testing of textiles, leather and footwear, and
- 4) Standcert in the field of management systems.

- **ISS supports women's entrepreneurship** - ISS Representatives at the Conference „Business in Heels“

Support to the development of women's entrepreneurship is a measure to encourage equal gender representation in all spheres of social life. In addition, gender equality is among the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5 – Gender equality). When it comes to entrepreneurship, according to the data of the Republic Bureau of Statistics, in 2020 women were the founders of 31% of entrepreneurial businesses in our country.

Strengthening small enterprises founded by women contributes to the development of the entire economy. That is why it is important for women entrepreneurs in our country to get better acquainted with the possibilities brought by the application of standards. As a useful tool and source of knowledge, standards offer solutions for efficient establishment of business processes, while respecting legal regulations.

Last year, ISS initiated cooperation with the club "Business in Heels" from Novi Sad, which brings together women entrepreneurs in order to empower them in starting and growing private business. The cooperation continued this year, at the Club's conference held on 15 June at the Novi Sad Fair, where the ISS Director, Tatjana Bojanić, was one of the speakers.

The participants of this, sixth regional conference, in addition to numerous useful tips on financing, sales and marketing, had the opportunity to learn how they can significantly improve their business through standards, i.e. their guidelines that are accepted all over the world. They also learned that ISS provides professional assistance in the application of standards, as well as that all necessary information about standards and their content can be obtained at two places in Novi Sad: the Regional Chamber of Commerce and the BSC Center.

- **ISS participation in the fairs**

We, the national standards bodies, can all agree that taking part and even co-participating at the national and international fairs has multiple advantages such as gaining: new NTC members, customers who purchase standards, wish to be trained by us, or get information on standards implementation. ISS experienced that being-on-the-spot during a fair, offering discounts on particular standards, answering questions face-to-face about standards in a certain field by the NTC Secretaries, raises awareness on standards and their application, as well as encourages new interested parties in the national standardization process. Since the most of the exhibitors at the fairs originate from SME sector, ISS participation gave them the opportunity to meet in person and reconnect with ISS again.

• **ISS at the 46th International Building Trade Fair**

In cooperation with the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PKS), representatives of the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS) attended the 46th International Building Trade Fair in Belgrade in April, 2022. This fair as a specialized international event, whose participants are all eminent domestic and foreign construction manufacturers, distributors and traders of equipment and materials, is an opportunity to present ISS activities in this area, as well as answer questions about standards and standardization.

Some of the publications ISS has presented were:

- BIM Standardization in Serbia,
- Study of the Construction Sector state,
- Eurocode 2: Design of concrete structures, and
- ISS Bulletin No.4, with the main topic "Construction sector in Serbia".

Cooperation has been agreed with the Regional Chamber of Commerce from Kruševac in order to support the manufacturing industry in the region, particularly SMEs in this region. Entrepreneurs were informed about European standards and regulations, as well as recommendations for the harmonization with the European market using standards. In this way, ISS continued the cooperation with PKS and promoted the existing service of the Infocenter in the Regional Chamber of Commerce.

5th Anniversary of World MSME Day

ISS special offer for MSMEs

In order to bring the standards closer to small and medium enterprises in our country, the Institute for Standardization of Serbia meets the needs of owners of micro, small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurs by offering them special benefits:

- one service of free online reading of standard packages containing 1 to 5 selected Serbian standards, for the period of 5 days (the value of this service is 1,300.00 RSD);
- the 30% discount on one of the following ISS services, optional: professional assistance in the application of standards, quality management system certification or in-house training in interpreting the requirements of the most popular standard for quality management system SRPS ISO 9001.2015, for a team of 5 employees;

In this way, the MSME sector has the opportunity to improve its business by obtaining a certain value free of charge, or with significant savings. Also, at the same time, there is an opportunity for users who have not been familiar with these ISS services to discover the advantages of their own choice.

The benefits were realized in July and August 2022.

Application of standards lead to sustainable business

The Institute for Standardization of Serbia, the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Economy organized 6 round tables in regional chambers of commerce in October. The round tables were realized within the framework of the EU project “IPA 2017 - EU for Serbia - Support for safer products” in the part related to strengthening the capacity of the national quality infrastructure and market surveillance.

Based on previously submitted requests from businessmen – members of regional chambers of commerce, representatives of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce, the Ministry of Economy and the Institute for Standardization of Serbia have selected the topics that were presented and the participants had the opportunity to receive all the necessary information, as well as to exchange opinions and experiences.

The topics that were presented:

1. Key challenges in the application of technical regulations in practice - interpretation of regulations, preparation of documentation, implementation of conformity assessment, product labeling, market surveillance;
2. International and European standards as support for companies for sustainable, competitive and responsible business;
3. Safety of children's playgrounds - condition, problems, competences, experiences;
4. Regulatory framework and international standards for quantification and reporting of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint of products;
5. Putting construction products on the domestic market - experiences, dilemmas, challenges, most frequently asked questions.

Seminar for ISS NTC members

Every year, the Institute for Standardization of Serbia organizes a seminar intended for domestic experts who are involved in the work on the adoption of Serbian standards, in order to inform them in a timely manner about all current events in standardization at the international, European and national level. This activity is planned in the annual work program of the Institute, as a special opportunity for acquiring particular knowledge related to standards and standardization, with the aim of training interested experts for effective and efficient work in NTCs.

The seminar for members of the ISS NTCs, held on 25 October, 2022, was special because, for the first time, parallel to face-to-face participation, online participation was also possible. More than 60 participants in total followed up the seminar, 31 participants in the ISS and the others via the ZOOM platform.

The program of this two-and-a-half-hour seminar included significant information regarding the valid rules of standardization practice and new trends in the development of standardization. The lecturers were Vladan Cvejić, NTC KS N057 member, Management and communication in the power system and representative of ISS in Working Group 10 of ISO Technical Committee 57 (IEC/TC 57/WG 10), Management and communication in the power system and representatives of ISS- a: Radiša Knežević, ISS, head of the Sector for General Areas of Standardization and Mirjana Mirković-Đorđević, MA, ISS, head of the Department for Chemical Technologies, Agriculture, Forestry, Safety, Environment and General Standards. They shared their long-term experience, advice and benefits from participating in the work of professional standards-making bodies.

In 2023, ISS will continue to coordinate the participation of Serbian experts in proposing, developing, drafting, reviewing and maintaining international standards and related documents, as well as at meetings of technical working bodies of international standardization organizations ISO and IEC and in European standardization organizations CEN and CENELEC. We will also undertake a series of activities in order to achieve greater involvement of local experts, especially representatives of the MSME sector, in the standardization process, which is extremely important for their professional development and for the further development of national standardization.