

ISS and SMEs in 2021 – Accomplishing resilience and stability of SMEs everyday work in the ongoing COVID-19 environment – the use of standards is a solid foundation

(Report on ISS activities to facilitate SMEs participation in the standardization process)

Belgrade, January 2022

Introduction

We can all agree that 2021 challenged the whole world in many different ways that we never imagined would be possible. The global COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in lockdowns and other changing circumstances upset the plans we made, put to the test our capability to adapt quickly to the changed business environment and reset and somewhat transformed our goals and planned activities.

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 2021

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 2021

- 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, provided simplified application for attending all kinds of training sessions.

All these improvements of the ISS web site were the result of 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 access to the standards for:

- 1) Electronic invoicing - SRPS EN 16931 standards series

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.

In order to promote the wider use of e-invoicing, the European Commission has sponsored access to two publications of the European Committee for Standardization CEN on the basis of which electronic invoices are created. The Institute for Standardization of Serbia has adopted the mentioned publications as Serbian standards in English. Standard SRPS EN 16931-1:2019 and technical specification SRPS CEN / TS 16931-2: 2017 can be downloaded in electronic format free of charge. Both publications provide instructions to the companies in the Republic of Serbia about the basic elements an electronic invoice should contain and enable interoperability in international and domestic trade.

For the purpose of facilitating the application of these standards to Serbian companies from all economy branches, the responsible ISS NTC II/06, *Telecommunications and information exchange between systems and data management*, has translated SRPS EN 16931-1:2019+AC:2020 in Serbian language. In this way, ISS enabled SMEs in particular the implementation of the semantic data model of the electronic invoice core elements by taking into account their special needs.

During 2021, 75 different registered users downloaded these standards, and the majority of them (70) were the representatives of SMEs.

2) Occupational health and safety management during the COVID-19 - SRPS ISO/PAS 45005:2021

SRPS ISO/PAS 45005, as the bilingual publication, gives guidelines for organizations on how to manage the risks arising from COVID-19 to protect work-related health, safety and well-being, and is applicable to all kinds of organizations, particularly to those that do not have HR as an organizational unit, such as SMEs. This document is applicable to organizations of all sizes and sectors, including those that have been operating throughout the pandemic, resuming or planning to resume operations following full or partial closure, re-occupying workplaces that have been fully or partially closed, are new and planning to operate for the first time.

During 2021, 38 various registered users downloaded this standard, and the majority of them (35) were the representatives of SMEs.

- **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) on CDs and in paper format. Free of charge publications are available for download from ISS web site, while other publications can be ordered and purchased.

1) **ISS Bulletin "Standardization"**

In 2021, a full 70 years after the publication of the first issue of the ISS Bulletin "Standardization", and after a 17-year break in the publication of this publication, the first issue of the renewed ISS Bulletin is available to all. Although ISS has informed its users using different channels - ISS Information, website, ISS News and social networks, our users still lacked a professional magazine in which they can get more detailed information about everything related to standardization. In this issue of the bulletin, a special place was dedicated to the text on Serbian standards and women's entrepreneurship, with several examples of our companies with women as CEOs or managers who have recognized the importance of applying the standards and have already achieved better business results. The ISS Bulletin is published four times a year.

2) **Collection "Crisis COVID-19: From Managerial Theory to Practice"**

In cooperation with the Center for Risk Analysis and Crisis Management, the Institute published the collection "Crisis COVID-19: From Managerial Theory to Practice". This publication is a

collection of authorized lectures prepared by crisis management experts first for our webinars held from March to May 2020, and now for this publication. This publication is an opportunity to find useful explanations and advice on how to approach solving the current crisis situation from different aspects in one place. In addition to the fact that the collection contains concrete examples related to crisis management during the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic experts presented their valuable experience in managing various crisis situations.

3) Publication “BIM standardization in Serbia”

ISS published and posted on the website for free download the publication in Serbian language “BIM standardizacija u Srbiji” (“BIM standardization in Serbia”), prepared within the cooperation of ISS with the Czech standards body – Czech Office for Standards, Metrology and Testing (ÚNMZ). This publication aims to support the digital transformation of the construction industry in our country through the promotion of standards in the field of information modeling of buildings, as well as raising awareness on the significance of standardization. ISS has also translated this document in English language and posted it on ISS web site.

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

The information about launching new CEN-CENELEC web site, and especially the dedicated webpage for SMEs, which was announced on ISS web site, stirred a lot of interest with Serbian SMEs, particularly ISS NTC members. They recognized the CEN-CENELEC invitation to submit their testimonials as an excellent opportunity to present their business activities as well as their experience, involvement and benefits resulting from the participation in standardization particularly at the national level to the European community, but also to their peers.

We have forwarded the questionnaire with instructions to the ISS NTC members, and received their responses. Out of 7 completed questionnaires that were sent to CEN-CENELEC, 4 Serbian SMEs were selected and 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 membership increased by 6 members from SME sector

During 2021, ISS conducted a campaign to increase the number of ISS members, both in the ISS Assembly and in ISS NTCs. Members of the Institute are entitled to certain benefits, such as: a special discount on the purchase of standards, related documents and other publications; special discount when paying for services provided by the Institute in performing standardization activities; special discount when paying the fee for participation in seminars, conferences, conferences and other professional gatherings organized by the Institute independently or in cooperation with other legal entities and organizations and other similar benefits.

As the result of this campaign, ISS increased its membership by 6 companies originating from SME sector, i.e.:

- 3 micro,
- 1 small and
- 2 medium

- **ISS supports women's entrepreneurship**

In cooperation with the Association of Business Women in Serbia, in May 2021, a one-hour promotional webinar was held for women entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs in general. The purpose of the webinar was to familiarize, first of all, the owners of micro and small companies with the activities of the Institute for Standardization of Serbia and the benefits they can have from the application of standards in their business.

The participants were introduced with the ways, advice and tools how to improve business through the implementation of quality management systems, as well as about professional assistance ISS offers in the application of standards they use in business activities.

- **Free webinars and trainings**

In 2021, even though the COVID-19 situation continued, ISS directed the training activities on other topics that were not primarily related to the working in the current crisis situations and pandemic environment. Several commercial as well as free-of-charge webinars and trainings that covered: business continuity management for SMEs during and after COVID-19 pandemic, disaster risk assessment and plans for protection and rescue, health aspects of the COVID-19, etc. were still held, but ISS focused on the following subjects, according to the demand of the customers and training participants, i.e.:

▪ Commercial webinars:

- a) Wastewater management - Action plans
- b) Internal auditors of management systems in accordance with the requirements of the standard SRPS ISO/IEC 17025: 2017 (practical training)
- c) Risk assessment techniques in accordance with SRPS EN 31010: 2011 (practical training) - Basic and advanced levels
- d) New technical regulations and standards in the field of safety of lifts and elevators
- e) Documents and marks of conformity in New Approach technical legislation
- f) Internal audits of the integrated management system according to SRPS ISO 9001: 2015, SRPS ISO 14001: 2015 and SRPS ISO 45001: 2018
- g) Measurement uncertainty as a requirement of the standard SRPS ISO/IEC 17025: 2017
- h) Project management - good practice in the application of SRPS ISO 21500: 2021 and SRPS ISO 21502: 2021
- i) Internal audits of management systems according to SRPS ISO 45001: 2018
- j) Interpretation of the requirements of the standard for laboratory accreditation SRPS ISO 17025: 2017 and recommendations for its application

▪ Free-of-charge webinars:

- a) From the Law on Information Security to the standard
- b) Safety and health at work - Guidelines for safe work during the COVID-19 pandemic in accordance with SRPS ISO/PAS 45005: 2021
- c) Standards in support of women's entrepreneurship
- d) Participation in national standardization - webinar for students
- e) Webinar for NTC members
- f) Towards the second generation of Eurocode 2
- g) Standards and Innovations

In total, during 2021, ISS organized 21 different commercial webinars with 231 participants. At the same time, there were 10 different free-of-charge webinars with 512 participants. Similar to 2020, approximately 80% of all participants were the representatives of SMEs.