

Strengthening SME - ISS Collaboration in 2024:
Deeper Engagement and Diversification
ISS Report 2024

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Introduction

This report details the Institute for Standardization of Serbia's (ISS) efforts to fulfill Article 6(3) of the EU Regulation on Standardization 1025/2012 throughout 2023. Article 6(3) mandates National Standards Bodies (NSBs) in the EU to report annually on activities that “encourage and facilitate the access of SMEs to standards and standards development processes” and share best practices with other EU NSBs.

Although Serbia remains in the EU accession process, it proactively embraces the regulation's spirit. Relevant provisions have been incorporated into:

- Law on Standardization (“Official Gazette of RS”, No.36/2009 and 46/2015)
- Decision amending the Founding Act of the ISS (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 27/2016)
- Statute of the ISS (“Official Gazette of RS”, No. 29/2017)

This commitment reflects the critical role of SMEs in Serbia's economy. Notably, 99.8% of active companies are SMEs, employing nearly two-thirds of non-financial sector employees and contributing 32% to the national GDP.

“Strengthening SME Collaboration in 2024: Deeper Engagement and Diversification”

In 2024, the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS) significantly expanded its engagement with Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Building on strong existing partnerships, we introduced innovative programs and services to foster deeper and more diverse collaborations. While continuing to provide essential support, we embraced new approaches to better serve the unique needs of the SME sector."

News in 2024

A) ISS confirmed its commitment to gender responsive standards

The Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS) took a significant step towards gender equality in standards development. On 1 February, 2023, ISS signed the UNECE Declaration on Gender Responsive Standards. This commitment led to the creation of ISS Action Plan 2023-2030 focusing on:

- ❖ Increasing women's participation in standardization committees, particularly in electrical engineering.
- ❖ Developing guidelines and promotional materials for everyone involved in creating standards.
- ❖ Collaborating with organizations to raise awareness about gender-responsive standards.
- ❖ Monitoring progress and reporting on achievements.

The action plan is available on both the ISS website (<https://iss.rs/en/download/page-section/document/14899>) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) website.

We're happy to announce that the ISS has already achieved its goal of increasing female participation in its electrical engineering standardization committees. Three new female experts have joined these committees.

ISS Published SRPS IWA 34, Women's Entrepreneurship - Key Definitions and General Criteria in Serbian language

Due to the growing interest on the topic of gender equality and women's entrepreneurship, ISS has published a document that belongs to the category of documents related to the standard - the International Workshop Agreement SRPS IWA 34, *Women's Entrepreneurship - Key Definitions and General Criteria*. This document was prepared by the ISS NTC A268, Sustainability and Social Responsibility.

SRPS IWA 34 is a translation of the International Workshop Agreement IWA 34:2021 from English to Serbian. The international document was developed during two virtual workshops, through the exchange of comments between the workshop participants. A total of 368 experts from 77 countries registered for this process. The list of experts who participated in one or both workshops, or who submitted written comments, is given in Annex A of this document. However, many more experts registered for the process, were kept informed and had the opportunity to participate and thus contribute.

This International Workshop Agreement establishes clear and universally agreed terms and definitions for use in programs and initiatives aimed at the economic empowerment of women, and thus the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, including gender-specific targets within SDG 5 on gender equality.

B) ISS further improves the web site

❖ News regarding the Construction Products Portal

The Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS) significantly enhanced its support for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) through the development and ongoing improvement of the Construction Products Portal. Launched in 2022 and further refined in 2023 and 2024, this valuable resource provides manufacturers, distributors, importers, and other stakeholders with clear and accessible information on regulations and standards for trading construction products within both the domestic and single European market.

The construction industry plays a pivotal role in the development of any nation, providing the essential infrastructure and foundation for economic and societal progress. Effective standardization is crucial within this sector to ensure safety, quality, and efficiency.

Leading standardization efforts in construction focus on structural design, primarily through the implementation of Eurocodes. These harmonized technical rules for structural design provide a common framework for calculating traditional and modern structures, encompassing both entire buildings and their individual components.

Eurocodes offer numerous benefits, including:

- ❖ **Enhanced safety and reliability:** By establishing common design rules, Eurocodes contribute to safer and more reliable structures.
- ❖ **Improved collaboration:** They facilitate better communication and understanding among all stakeholders involved in the construction process, from designers and engineers to contractors and clients.
- ❖ **Increased innovation:** Eurocodes provide a solid foundation for further research and development in structural engineering.
- ❖ **Enhanced competitiveness:** They support the free movement of construction products and engineering services within the European market.

In accordance with Serbian Construction Regulations, the application of Eurocode standards is mandatory for new construction and the reconstruction of existing buildings.

To facilitate the adoption of Eurocodes, the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS) has taken several key steps:

- ❖ Published thematic electronic collections: ISS has published a series of electronic collections of Eurocodes and their corresponding national annexes, making this vital information readily accessible.
- ❖ Developed a user-friendly handbook: To assist users, particularly SMEs, in applying Eurocode 2 for concrete structures, ISS has developed a valuable handbook titled "Examples of Calculations of Concrete Buildings According to Eurocode 2," available for download from the ISS website.

These initiatives demonstrate ISS's commitment to supporting the construction industry by providing clear guidance, accessible resources, and a robust framework for standardization.

C) Creation of New ISS Portals for MD, LVD and EMC

Considering the constant annual increase in the number of visits to the Construction Products Portal, ISS has developed the portals that provide information about Serbian and European harmonized standards, as well as national technical regulations aligned with the MD, LVD and EMC Directives. This part of the ISS website is supported by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) commissioned by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to implement the Open Regional Fund for South - East Europe - Foreign Trade.

❖ Portal for Machinery Products - Machinery Directive (2006/42/EC) and its amendments

This dedicated portal simplifies the process of finding Serbian standards that are identical to the European harmonized standards (hEN) in the field of machinery. It provides an up-to-date and comprehensive overview of hEN, empowering manufacturers (particularly SMEs), distributors, importers, and other professionals involved in standardization, accreditation, conformity assessment, testing, inspection, and certification. By offering easy access to all necessary information related to the Rulebook on Safety of Machinery in the Republic of Serbia (which aligns with Directive 2006/42/EC and its Amendment, Directive 2009/127/EC), this portal eliminates the need to search multiple websites, streamlining the process for all users.

❖ Portal for Electrical Equipment Intended for Use Within Certain Voltage Limits - Low Voltage Directive (2014/35/EU) and its amendments

The LVD Portal streamlines the search for Serbian standards adopting European Harmonized Standards (hEN) for electrical equipment within specific voltage limits. It offers a comprehensive and up-to-date overview of hEN, empowering manufacturers (especially SMEs), distributors, importers, and other professionals engaged in standardization, accreditation, conformity assessment, testing, inspection, and certification. By providing easy access to all necessary information related to the Serbian Regulation on Electrical Equipment (aligned with EU Directive 2014/35/EU), this portal eliminates the need for extensive website searches, streamlining the process for all stakeholders. This centralized resource ensures convenient access and ongoing updates on relevant standards for all interested parties in Serbia.

❖ **Portal for Electromagnetic Compatibility - Electromagnetic Compatibility Directive (2014/30/EU) and its amendments**

The EMC Portal simplifies finding Serbian standards that adopt European Harmonized Standards (hEN) for electrical equipment. It provides an updated list of hEN relevant to Electromagnetic Compatibility (EMC), as outlined in the Serbian Rulebook on EMC (aligned with EU Directive 2014/30/EU). This resource benefits manufacturers (especially SMEs), distributors, importers, and professionals involved in standardization, accreditation, conformity assessment, testing, inspection, and certification.

D) 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.

New ISS publication in Serbian language - ISO/IEC 27001:2022 - Information Security Management Systems - A practical guide for SMEs

The Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS) has published a Serbian translation of the ISO publication dedicated to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the field of information security.

In today's digital environment, cybercrime poses a serious challenge to businesses, especially SMEs which make up the majority of the global market. This guide assists SMEs in developing and implementing an Information Security Management System (ISMS) in accordance with the ISO/IEC 27001:2022 standard.

E) ISS Bulletin “Standardization” delivering diverse insights in 2024

Throughout 2024, the Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS) continued publishing its impactful quarterly “Standardization” Bulletin. Each issue explored various aspects of the standardization field, including:

- ❖ The importance of standardization in lightning protection: Highlighting its crucial role in ensuring infrastructure safety in the face of extreme weather.
- ❖ The rise of smart grids: Discussing how these innovative technologies are transforming power systems.
- ❖ An interview with Professor Jelena Dobrić: Offering insights into the work of European standardization bodies, raising awareness of standards among students, and showcasing her new book on steel structures.
- ❖ News from the national quality infrastructure: Celebrating the achievements of Serbian experts in standardization.
- ❖ A historical overview of standardization in Serbia: Commemorating the 90th anniversary of standardization in the country.
- ❖ Updates from international standardization bodies: Covering the ISO and IEC General Assemblies and the launch of a new online standards development platform.
- ❖ Youth perspectives on standardization: Featuring interviews with young winners of a video clip competition.
- ❖ Innovation and the future: Presenting a new agreement on monitoring drone misuse.

- ❖ Progress in European integration: Highlighting the accreditation of validation and verification bodies and the adoption of key strategic documents.

By exploring such diverse topics, the “Standardization” Bulletin provides valuable information for professionals, researchers, and anyone interested in the impact of standardization.

F) ISS Participation in National Fairs: A Key Platform for Standards Engagement

Fairs offer valuable opportunities for standards bodies like ISS to connect with interested parties and:

- ❖ Expand Reach:
- ❖ Attract new experts: Recruit qualified individuals to serve on technical committees (NTCs).
- ❖ Generate business: Offer standards, training, and implementation guidance to visitors.
- ❖ Build partnerships: Connect with potential collaborators and industry leaders.
- ❖ Enhance Awareness and Engagement:
- ❖ Educate the public: Answer questions, address misconceptions, and showcase the benefits of standards.
- ❖ Promote participation: Encourage stakeholders to actively contribute to the standards development process.

Focus on SMEs:

- ❖ Directly engage with key players: Reach out to SMEs, a significant portion of fair exhibitors.
- ❖ Strengthen relationships: Reconnect with existing business contacts and offer tailored support.
- ❖ Empower businesses: Help SMEs understand how standards can address their specific needs and challenges

ISS began collaborating with Belgrade Fair in late 2023 by participating in the International Energy Fair and the Ecology and Environmental Protection Fair. Building on this success, ISS actively participated in numerous trade fairs throughout 2024.

- ❖ Early 2024: ISS participated in the **Balkan Textile Fair** and the **International Tourism Fair**, where the focus was on “Standards in Tourism.” Visitors had the opportunity to access free standards and learn about ISS services.
- ❖ **Construction Fair**: This event featured themed days, including a presentation on Eurocodes and a lecture on “Construction through the prism of standardization.” A training session on occupational health and safety was also conducted.
- ❖ **Technical Fair**: The theme was “Inspiring Development,” with a focus on adopting VDE Standards for connecting user installations to electrical networks. Five speakers presented on various aspects of VDE standards, their benefits for SMEs, and their practical application.
- ❖ **Eco Fair**: ISS concluded its 2024 trade fair participation by returning to the event that initiated this successful partnership.

By actively engaging in these fairs, ISS effectively promoted the importance of standards, connected with key interested parties, and enhanced its visibility within the Serbian market.

G) Increasing the number of NTC and ISS Assembly members

Adoption of standards takes place through the work of technical expert bodies, that consist of representatives of all interested parties: business, scientific and educational institutions, state bodies, associations and others. In the system of national standardization, SRPS standards are adopted within 177 currently active NTCs (KS), with a total of more than 1,5500 members. The number of members in one NTC varies from three to more than 20, and the harmonization of their views is achieved by consensus.

In addition, ISS Assembly increased the number of its members by 2, mostly from MSME sector.

H) Standards Even Closer to Engineers

Four newly formed Information Centers in the regional centers of the Serbian Chamber of Engineers (IKS) in Kraljevo, Čačak, Požarevac and Bor facilitate their members free access to the texts of Serbian standards. The easier access to Serbian standards through the newly formed Information Centers is the result of expanded cooperation between the Institute and the Serbian Chamber of Engineers.

A meeting was held with representatives of these four Information Centers. Among other things, the meeting presented the Institute's services, with a particular focus on the Portal for Construction Products, which provides information on regulations and standards for the trade in construction products on the domestic and single European market.

- ❖ The cooperation between IKS and the Institute, which has lasted for many years and is realized through cooperation agreements, is aimed at providing engineers in the field of planning and construction, members of IKS, with the opportunity to quickly and easily access the latest information from the standards they need for their professional work-

I) ISS fosters expertise through specialized seminars

ISS invests in the development of domestic expertise by organizing seminars for experts and professionals involved in adopting Serbian standards. These seminars, integrated into the annual work program, offer:

- **Access to the latest information:** Participants gain valuable insights into the latest developments in international, European, and national standardization.
- **Enhanced skills and knowledge:** Experts acquire specialized knowledge and skills related to standards and standardization processes.
- **Empowered participation:** The training equips participants to effectively contribute to national technical committees (NTCs).

Education that exceeded the expectations of the organizers

There has not been such a high level of interest in a training course at the Institute for a long time as there was yesterday for the training course "Personal Data Protection - Standards, European Regulations, Legislation and Challenges in Practice". The ISS meeting hall was filled with nearly 50 interested participants. This time, it was organized in cooperation with the Serbian Employers' Union, whose members, mostly coming from SME sector, were happy to respond to the call for education.

The training was intended for all those in their organizations who are responsible for personal data protection, as well as for managers of organizations, HR managers, and people responsible for

management systems. The aim was to introduce them to the basic concepts of privacy and personal data protection, as well as the place of personal data protection in numerous standards such as ISO/IEC 29100, ISO/IEC 27001, ISO/IEC 27701, and ISO/IEC 27018.

The great response from the participants is very important for the Institute, which strives to point out the importance of standards present in numerous legal regulations through various trainings. Due to the importance of the topic of this training and the very good impression of all participants, ISS will repeat it in the next period.

ISS new seminars

1. Application of risk analysis in medical devices

On 1 March, 2024, the Serbian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Institute for Standardization of Serbia are organizing a seminar on the topic of “Application of risk analysis for medical devices”.

The safety of a medical device is one of the basic criteria that must be met before placing a medical device on the market. Safety is a necessary condition that directly affects not only the health of users, but can also affect their lives.

The seminar was intended for organizations that:

- develop, manufacture, sell and distribute medical devices;
- are suppliers of medical devices;
- perform servicing of medical devices, under license or in their own name;
- provide consulting services during development, production and after-sales activities;
- participate in checks, in the process of certification and assessment of technical documentation of medical devices;
- are associated with software related to a medical device, or the software itself is a medical device

2. Seminar on the Circular Economy

The Institute for Standardization of Serbia (ISS) has prepared a new seminar, this time focusing on the circular economy. Experts from various sectors of the economy and industry will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the international standards adopted in May 2024. All participants will be able to learn about the solutions offered by the circular economy standards.

Climate change poses a threat to almost all economic sectors and industries, either directly or indirectly, and the circular economy represents the foundation for solving these problems. Today's production and consumption patterns are unsustainable and cause environmental degradation, irrational management of resources and waste. Therefore, there is an urgent need to start applying a much more "circular" model that redefines the economy around the following principles: waste and pollution management, as well as extending the life of products and materials as much as possible.

The seminar is intended for experts from various sectors of the economy and industry who deal with environmental protection, waste management, circular economy, environmental management system managers, and employees in any field whose activity involves environmental protection, regardless of the size and type of organization.

J) ISS celebrates significant jubilee – 90 years of standardization in Serbia

On Thursday, 10 October, 2024, a Ceremonial Academy was held at the Rectorate of the University of Belgrade to mark 90 years of standardization in Serbia. This significant event for the Institute for Standardization of Serbia was attended by numerous guests from both Serbia and abroad.

A monograph specially prepared for this occasion, presenting the development of standardization in Serbia, was presented to all the distinguished guests.

Individuals and institutions, ISS NTC members, mostly originating from SMEs, that have contributed to the development and improvement of standardization in Serbia for many years were awarded and acknowledged on this occasion.

Also, a panel on education in standardization was held at the “Svetozar Marković” University Library in Belgrade. On the same day, an exhibition on standardization “Standardization Through Old Prints” was opened in the library, as well as an information center for standards, providing all library users with electronic access to the collection of all Serbian standards.

K) Strengthening the regional cooperation

Within the scope of the cooperation agreement between the Institute for Standardization of Serbia and the Institute for Standardization and Metrology of Republika Srpska in Banja Luka, ISS opened the Information center for accessing Serbian standards at their premises in Banja Luka.

All businesses, professionals, as well as students, professors, and pupils, have at their disposal, in the mentioned location, existing and future standards developed and published by the national standardization body of the Republic of Serbia.

The information center in Banja Luka is the seventh in a row that the ISS has opened for all interested users.

Conclusion

In 2025, ISS will continue to actively involve Serbian experts in:

- ❖ Proposing, developing, and revising international standards and related documents.
- ❖ Participating in technical working bodies of ISO, IEC, CEN, and CENELEC.

A key priority is increasing the involvement of Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in standardization. This empowers MSMEs and contributes to the overall advancement of national standardization.

ISS actively cultivates a national pool of standardization experts, fostering informed participation, effective collaboration, and a robust and innovative standardization landscape in Serbia.