IFAN NEWSLETTER

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IFAN European group publishes Guide 5

At the 47th IFAN Members' Assembly the IFAN European group announced the publication of its new Guide 5 Introduction to the world of European standards for standards users.

This guide is intended to give some basic information on the European standardization system to the beginner, who has just started to work in an organization that uses standards.

All IFAN Guides can be found on the IFAN Website:
www.ifan.org/ifan-publications.html

This year the ISO General Assembly was a virtual affair on 24 September, where formal items were covered. In order to try to give the members some of the feel of a normal GA, ISO set up a series of Members Webinars and the first one was held on Monday 28 September with IFAN Treasurer Keith Wilson taking the role of discussant.

IFAN participates in ISO Members Webinar, Meeting user needs.

Several polls were done during the meeting and the first asked 'Does your NSB currently collect feedback from users?' 49% said they did and then the poll asked which stakeholders do you ask, customers, experts or both and 64% answered both. [See photo of poll on page 2] There were three presentations from ISO members. The first was given by Maurice Musuga, UNBS, Uganda, Maurice spoke about a nationwide survey of different stakeholder groups which helped UNBS develop new products based on stakeholder needs. After this presentation was the second poll which asked if their NSB had a defined process for asking for feedback and 75% said they did, the follow up question asked if new products or process had been developed following this and 73% said yes.

The second presentation was by Nelson Al Assal Filho, ABNT, Brazil and Daniel Trillos, ICONTEC, Columbia. Together they developed an open system where stakeholders can provide feedback at the beginning of the standards development process. This new methodology for collecting feedback is expected to shine light on topics relevant to standards users and influence the content at the conceptual stage.

A third poll then asked what methods your NSB used to collect feedback from users? Top answers were emails 85% and online platform 66%.

The third presentation was from Sebastian Kreigsmann, DIN, Germany and Jappe van de Zwan, NEN, the Netherlands, who told the meeting about a project being carried out by a large group of European ISO members who investigating what standards of the future might look like.

Users have indicated a preference for machine readable standards and the group is working with national stakeholders on the next steps.

The final poll asked if members felt that there was a demand for machine readable standards in their national market. 24% thought there was a big demand, while 28% said a small demand with 31% saying they were expecting there to be a growing demand. When asked if their NSB was working on such standards only 18% said they were.

The three presentations was followed by a panel session with IFAN's treasurer Keith Wilson asking the questions to the presenters.

There followed an opportunity to move to a breakout room to discuss the issues raised with the presenters. As there were 3 IFAN members present we each attended one of the breakout groups and here are our reports.

Keith Wilson attended the group with Maurice Musuga of Uganda, Keith writes: Maurice, the Uganda presenter, dealt with questions and in the end I asked all but one of them. The other question was from a delegate from Kenya, who asked about the support that UNBS gave to SMEs.

I asked about UNBS use of radio to promote standards. Maurice said they used scheduled programmes not adverts. They also used youtube to reach SMEs. He said UNBS is government funded although this is last-resort funding. They have to generate revenue which they keep, and it is expected that this revenue will finance all of their operations. The use of short informative guidance sheets like the rice example he showed had been very successful. For SMEs, UNBS can provide the standards they need at very low cost or free where the business will benefit from certification. Certification is where the NSB makes it money. Maurice said that certification was highly trusted by consumers and customers, enabling small businesses to grow and compete with larger ones. He said it provides confidence to startups and to buyers. The government supports this. It especially supports where a certified business helps to reduce the outflow of raw materials to other countries which then reimport them as high value products.

UNBS wants to improve understanding of the value of standards among micro businesses and self em-

ployed, so they support UNBS in using youtube, picture based guides and storytelling. They give short and plain language explanations of the importance of key technical information in standards. His example of the moisture content of rice was good. An interesting viewpoint also on who is a standards user.

Together with government backing, they are seeking to grow education about standards from Year 6 pupils onwards, and training for standards users. He saw this as a fundamental way of improving the use of standards and understanding of certification and conformity assessment.

I attended the session with Nelson Al Assal of Brazil and Daniel Trillos of Columbia, we discussed how their database worked and the keywords they use as well as projects that had been started following stakeholders not finding a standard on the topic that they searched for. The method they are using to gain information on user and stakeholder needs works well.

We also discussed the idea of setting up national standards user groups in their countries which was received favourably.
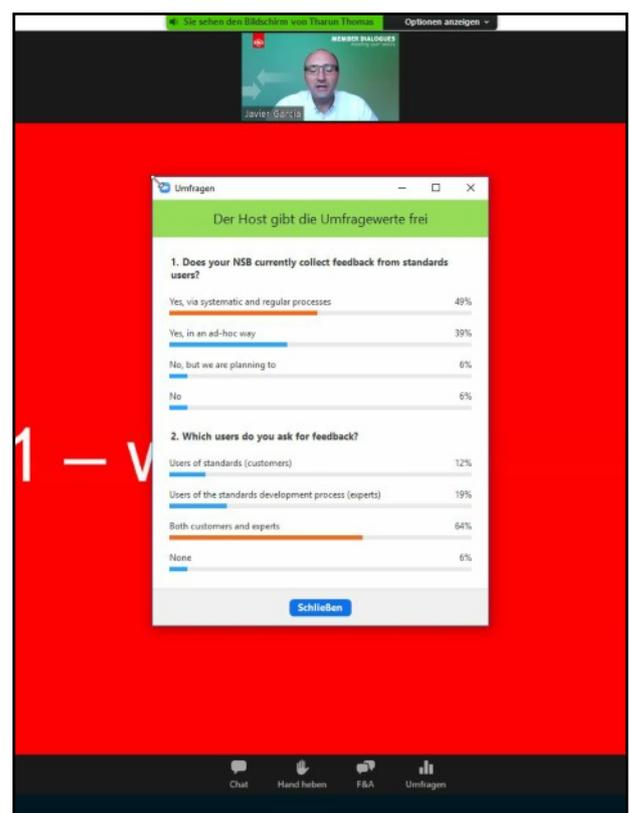
Dr Raith attended the third breakout session with Sebastian Kreigsmann, Germany and Jappe van de Zwan, the Netherlands, Dr Raith reports: The highlights were Mr. Kriegsmann describing again that they had worked (and one has to work) "from right to left" in the first slide I attached. Then the lady said she could not understand for what type of standards the whole topic could be useful; she said obviously not for ISO 9001 which she knew well; then the speakers explained to her that ISO 9001 is clearly structured so that it can very easily and successfully be transferred into a Smart Standard. As a next step the two speakers mentioned a pilot project, one of three they listed (I could not write down which ones). The lady (obviously from outside Europe) asked

if "she" could participate in a/the pilot project, and the answer was yes, in the end it will be an international project.

In between I asked "my" question resp. comment on a remark of Mr. Filho (Session 2) who had said that with digitization standards development becomes so fast that standards are no longer static but become constantly changing. I disagreed because then we get legal problems with standards and application is no longer safe. Mr. Kriegsmann agreed 100 % and Mr. van der Zwan to 80% or 90%.

A recording of the event can be found on YouTube at

47th IFAN Members' Assembly - a virtual event

The 47th IFAN Members' Assembly had been planned to be held in Berlin, Germany kindly hosted by ANP and DIN, however as with so many events around the world the event had to be virtual instead.

On 19 October around 25 members joined a virtual meeting. We had one guest speaker at the event, Mr Scott Steedman, ISO Vice-President Policy and BSI Director of Standards, Scott discussed the challenges to standards developing organizations of the pandemic, and how they had risen to the this challenge. Fact to face technical committee meetings had quickly converted to virtual and had found some advantages and the Standards Developers themselves had risen to the challenge of quickly producing standards on such things as community face masks and had also made standards on PPF and ventilators free to download.

A film (video) of Scott's talk can be found here.

The President then gave his report for the year, noting that when he spoke last year of the challenges ahead he could not have envisioned just how difficult 2020 would be for the whole world. The Presidents report can be viewed here.

The remainder of the meeting comprised the formal part of the meeting, which included reports from the various working and project groups and some discussion of likely activities in the coming year.

The Treasurer presented his report and the budget for the next year was agreed and the auditor was appointed for a further year.

A strategy to 2025 was agreed, which is based on the current strategy and the actions to implement the strategy were discussed with members offering to participate.

IFAN President Ross Wraight was elected to serve a second term as President and Board member Bernhard Angermaier was also elected to serve a second term of office.

The term of office of the Vice-President Corporate ends on 31st December this year and so an election was held and Ms Claudia Bach who represents SES at IFAN was elected. This left a vacant seat for an additional member of the Board and Mr Bertin Ntumba President of APROMEN was elected to the vacant post.

All terms of office start on 1st January 2021.

Our out going Vice President Vered Oren was thanked for all her hard work for IFAN and it was noted that as Honorary Marketing and Promotions Manager she would continue to attend board meeting to share her expertise with the Board.

The 48th Members Assembly will, provisionally, be held in London during ISO week, 20-24 September 2021 hosted by BSI with BSS and ANP have offered to host the 2022 meeting as they were unable to host this year's meeting due to the pandemic.

SES 69th Annual Conference 2020, virtual 5-6 August 2020

'The Value of Standardization and the Standards Professional'

Report by Keith Wilson

In an unprecedented year, SES went ahead with its annual Conference. With the theme 'The Value of Standardization and the Standards Professional' it was their first online Conference.

The SES make the event free of charge for both SES members and non-members including IFAN members, an opportunity not to be missed.

A great deal of preparation must have gone into the two days, including frequent contact with attendees and, through the software platform Whova, opportunities to make contacts and network. While it did not have the breadth and spontaneity, the serendipity, of a physical conference, it continued the reputation for top quality sessions and a great learning environment.

Conference started with a Keynote by Jim Pauley, of the National Fire Protection Association. His engaging presentation covered a number of matters currently affecting and on the minds of standards users. They ranged across counterfeit standards, increasing standards user demand for standards incorporated in regulations to be made available without charge, the built-in security and rigour in systems of standards publication, inter-relationships between standards aimed at different sectors, standards users' information seeking in the context of standards, use of out of date standards, and users' understanding of standards. Standards must be able to answer questions that solve a problem, and connect into the standards user's core problem-solving information framework.

The Link Between Community Resiliency and Codes & Standards
The session's basis was around building and electrical codes and standards covering safety and product performance requirements, and how they 'ensure community resiliency before, during, and after a natural disaster'. It looked at how 'societal demands, emerging technologies, and best practices can be incorporated into building and electrical codes and standards to enhance and improve community resiliency'. The big opportunity for progress and improvement is in the rapidly increasing amount of available data, which codes and standards provide a context. However this also brings challenges in areas like data security and privacy.

Why Competencies are Important for Today's Standardization Professional
Competencies 'help describe what abilities the organization needs and how to acquire them'. The presentations in this session focused on the importance of defining the skill sets and competencies needed to be successful in standards and conformity assessment. It highlighted the distinction between skills and competencies, the role they play in career development, and the work being done at the International Organization for Standardization and in Asia on competencies for standardization professions. It discussed plans to develop an SES competency framework for standardization professionals and its job description clearinghouse. The speakers referred to ISO IWA 30-1:2019 Competence of standards professionals - Part 1:In companies.

Attracting Underrepresented Interest Categories - Stakeholder Participation in the Standards Development Process

Standards published as a result of consensus are the backbone of standards development organizations. The session looked at ways of ensuring balance in achieving consensus, with a major potential barrier, because of the voluntary nature of the standards development process, in ensuring broad and diverse participation. One way of helping to achieve this is to attract widespread representation and support from sector standards users, membership, academic and trade groups.

The Impact of AI: New Ways to Work

The session explored the impact and influence of AI technology in enhance and shaping new ways to work. It covered a range of AI technologies including chatbots, the evolution, range and availability of User Interfaces, Query by Intent, input data management including version control in constantly learning AI applications, data validation, record keeping (retained information), and protection against data contamination and malicious use. It also highlighted the possibility of over-trust in technology as a danger. The presenters referred to ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC42, Artificial intelligence.

Enhancing Consumer Participation in Standards Development

I have copied the session's introduction which fully explains it, and also provides a reminder of the USA standards development process. "Voluntary consensus standards affect almost every consumer product, yet consumers have long been underrepresented in the development of these standards. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) accredits standard development organizations (SDOs) by auditing an SDO's standard development processes according to ANSI's Essential Requirements, which details criteria for the development process, such as balance, openness, lack of dominance, due process, and consensus. SDOs best achieve these requirements-and optimize their standards- when consumers have a seat at the table. Despite efforts from SDOs of all sizes and funding levels, nearly all struggle to connect with and engage consumers in their standards activities". ANSI staff moderated a roundtable covering its approach to consumer participation in the voluntary consensus standards process and discussed ways in which consumer participation can be enhanced. ASTM and CSA representatives discussed their current levels of consumer participation and outreach method, and a representative from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) discussed its role in standards activities, their perspectives on consumer participation.

Rethinking Privacy Agreements

Internet of Things technologies often involve the collection of user personal data, and there are growing privacy concerns around how these data are collected and managed. Privacy agreements remain the primary source of privacy information for users; however, these documents are often lengthy and difficult to understand. The session explained research to modify privacy agreement layout using pictograms to better communicate key privacy terms to technology users. Pictograms were developed to communicate privacy concepts that matter most to users through an iterative design process that was validated with user testing. The presenters covered in detail how they went about the research and the tools they used. The results represent a starting point for improving user comprehension and decision-making around privacy terms and provide an opportunity for standards development in this rapidly evolving field.

https://www.csagroup.org/article/research/rethinking-privacy-agreements/

Member Engagement in a 2D World: Connections Beyond the Screen

The closing keynote presentation by Amy Lestition Burke was entitled Member Engagement in a 2D World: Connections Beyond the Screen. Amy offered a broad reflection on the challenges faced during the pandemic, as more engagement, communication, interaction and work becomes two-dimensional screen based.

Standards under the Microscope

By Keith Wilson

In the fifth in a series of articles, Keith Wilson reflects on the expectations on consultants and specifiers and their use of standards arising from evidence to date given to into the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

Keith Wilson is a Construction Knowledge Consultant, Vice-Chair of British Standards Society and IFAN Treasurer.

On the 14 June 2017 a catastrophic fire broke out in the 24 storey Grenfell Tower in London, containing 129 flats (apartments). It is believed to have started in a flat on the fourth floor. The cause was an electrical fault in a fridge-freezer in the kitchen. Videos of the fire show its rapid spread up the outside of the building, and subsequent difficulty in containing it. The fire resulted in 72 deaths.

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry is examining the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire. It is in two phases. The first phase focused on an examination of the events of the evening the fire occurred. The second phase is examining 'the causes of these events, including how Grenfell Tower came to be in a condition which allowed the fire to spread in the way identified by Phase 1'. Evidence given so far has been from two professional consultant companies, the architect and the fire safety engineer for the design stage. Both were employed by the owner of Grenfell Tower.

Although at an early stage, and paused because of the Covid19 public health emergency, I have reflected on some recurring aspects of evidence given under examination and cross examination. My four reflections can apply to standards users working in business sectors, not just construction, where a failure in health and safety would be devastating or catastrophic. Although the evidence was on behalf of two companies, they were represented in court by the individuals who had worked on the project at the time (one had since left their company).

1. Demonstrating competence.
Hopefully in our work we won't have to face a legal cross examination. The likelihood may be very low, but its impact is very high. Standards users who require the implementation of standards without understanding their purpose and application in the context of the specific use for which they are being used are likely to find themselves in a grave situation under examination and cross examination. Standards users acting in a professional capacity, especially in the UK if they are Registered in a regulated profession or Chartered, can expect to be questioned about the basis on which they use standards. Counsel for the Grenfell Tower Inquiry usually starts their examination of witnesses with the questions 'are you registered/chartered?', 'what is your professional experience (and knowledge) of the issues being examined?', 'do you undertake CPD (Continuing Professional Development)?', 'do you keep records of it?'.

2. Ignorance of primary and critical national standards. The Fire Safety consultant was appointed to provide a fire safety strategy report for the major improvement, refit and repairs project under examination. It was a company with broad experience in this field. Its sister company was one of the UK's largest UKAS accredited fire testing and research organisations. The consultant's project leader for the Grenfell Tower project had experience of major improvement, refit and repairs projects, a high level academic qualification in fire engineering, and a track record in their field in consultancy and regulatory approvals. They said in their fee proposal "In developing the report, we would use our expert knowledge of fire safety design codes". At the time of their consultancy, the standard BS PAS 911:2007 Fire strategies - guidance and framework for their formulation, was current. It is still current today.

Counsel asked the project leader
"Can I just ask you to look at something. It's something

Called PAS 911 of 2007… . Have you heard of something like that?"
Answer: "I don't - - I'm not familiar with that particular - "
Question: "I'll show it to you… . It is not a British Standard, It's a PAS. You know the difference between the two?"
Answer: 'Publicly available specification".
There followed some checking that the PAS's publication date pre-dated the project, which it did. Counsel carried on questioning, "Is this a document you and others at (the fire safety engineer) would have used at the time?"
Answer: "No".
Question: "It's not?"
Answer: "No".
Counsel then asked "If I could just ask you one or two questions on it" and proceeded with a forensic questioning of the project leader's knowledge and judgment of it.

Among the outcomes of this exchange for standards users generally is the necessity to be aware of all product- and project-applicable standards. If some are not used, have a clear rationale for the decision based on levels of understanding in the circumstances of their potential use.

3. Ignorance of current legislation, and due diligence for standards referenced in contract documents.
The architect was a BS ISO 9001 and 14001 assessed practice. Evidence was given by a Partner (joint owner) of the architect, their project leader and an architectural assistant. Counsel referred the project leader's witness statement in which he wrote "In the internal email I expressed my view that I felt (the architect) was 'a little green on process and technicality ', because (the architect), as a practice, had not previously been involved in high-rise residential, heating renewal or the overcladding of occupied buildings". These are critical components in examining the failure of Grenfell Tower. The architectural assistant was responsible for design of the cladding system that failed in the fire. and its compliance with the England regulations. His architectural degree was from a Scottish university, where the curriculum covered the Scotland Building Regulations, not the England regulations. He abandoned his studies to become a registered (licensed) architect, but had studied in London before his abandonment. He also said he had extensive experience of designing in England with the England regulations, but offered no evidence of Continuing Professional Development.

In the UK, many buildings were specified using a national master specification, NBS. This specified 'the systemised building envelope' (the cladding), which is a principal focus of the Inquiry, through performance criteria and execution. As well as invoking British Standards, it also invokes a standard from the Centre for Window and Cladding Technology (CWCT). CWCT is regarded as expert in the field of window and cladding systems and products, a standards development organisation whose standard is also heavily referenced in government guidance deemed to satisfy the regulations.

Counsel questioned the architectural assistant about its use, as it was invoked in the project's NBS specification and in the government guidance. Here is a question and answer on the topic in which the respondent demonstrates they hadn't read the standard invoked in their specification and referenced in the legislation guidance.
Counsel: "So can we take it that your understanding o(the architect's) role at the time was that even though the CWCT standard had been specified in the NBS spec, you left it to (the specialist cladding contractor) to be familiar with the standard?"
Reply: "Yeah, they were CWCT accredited, so they would know".
Counsel: "You didn't think it was any part of your role just to spot check by reference to that standard the work they had done?"
Reply: "Well, it was, by the fact it's in the specification, the employer's requirements, and they are required to meet that standard."
Counsel: "How would you go about checking whether they had done that if you hadn't read the CWCT".
Answer: "But I didn't have a role to check it; they had a role to comply to it. It's different".

4. Putting cost before competence and capability.
The architect was already working on a school and leisure centre project for the client, a public authority council. Their service had been procured under OJEU rules which placed a cap on their fees. The client offered the Grenfell Tower design to the architect without competitive tender. This was on the condition that the architect's fees when added to their other project's fees would still come under the OJEU cap for the other project. In other words, the two projects' fees would not exceed the cap for the first project. The project leader noted his concern to the Partner as being "concerned about the emphasis of working at risk while planning to OJEU" and he agreed under questioning he had been concerned about the consultant not getting paid and the (low) level of fees to do the job.

The Partner answered this question:
Question: "Now, the process of appointment of (the architect) to the Grenfell Tower project was rather different from (their existing school and leisure centre project for the client). Perhaps I can ask you this way: did the process of appointment of (the architect) to the Grenfell Tower project require you to have any relevant skills , knowledge and experience of overcladding an existing high-rise residential tower block?"
Answer: "No."

The Fire Safety consultant's fee including expenses for the £9 million project was £2,860. The client was also under pressure from the government to reduce costs by capping the amount it could borrow to finance the work.

Standards users should consider very carefully their position in their access to, understanding of and compliance with standards referenced in regulations and/or invoked in specifications and best practice guidance, if they come under cost reduction pressures where health and safety failures would be devastating or catastrophic. Irrespective of the viability of pricing for work, they are still required to be aware of the full range of applicable standards, know the scope and national conditions of a large number of them, and understand and implement standards invoked in regulations, contract documents and standard operating procedures.

5. Non-existent, ineffectual or lazy communication and assumption.
Approval is permission to proceed. Comment is expressing an opinion or reaction.

The questions to the architectural assistant and answers below relate to the specification of components in the system used to clad Grenfell Tower.

Question: "You can see that (the cladding contractor) used the word "approval". Did you go back to him and say 'Dear (cladding contractor), surely you understand by now that we, (the architect), are not in the business of approving drawings'?"
Answer: "I think, to be fair, this is commonly misused across all projects and has been for a long time, misunderstanding in the distinction between approval and comment".
Question: "He used the expression 'comment/approval'. Can you explain why you didn't correct his misunderstanding, if that's what it was?"
Answer: "For the reason I've given , that I think the word 'approval' is used very loosely within the industry, when that's not actually what it means."

Later on, counsel asked these questions of the architectural assistant's understanding of the CWCT standard.

Question: "Did you, when you came to look at this NBS specification, note that the CWCT standard for systemised building envelopes was stipulated in it? The CWCT clause is fairly standard in H92 (the specification section for the cladding system), I believe."
Answer: "Yes."
Question: "So do we take it from that that, given that you knew that the NBS spec had been used for Grenfell, it would logically follow that you knew that the CWCT standard was set out as part of the specification? Did you, when you came to look at this NBS specification, note that the CWCT standard for systemised building envelopes was stipulated in it? The CWCT clause is fairly standard in H92, I believe."
Answer: "Yes."
Question: "So do we take it from that that, given that you knew that the NBS spec had been used for Grenfell, it would logically follow that you knew that the CWCT standard was set out as part of the specification?"
There followed some discussion and clarification, then
Question: "Did you ever read the standard, the CWCT standard for systemised building envelopes?"
Answer: "Oh, I see, sorry. As a straightforward question, no."

It is not acceptable for a standards user to invoke a standard simply by reference, without either understanding it in detail if it is primary to the product or service, or understanding its scope if it is supporting a primary standard. Standards are written with precision, with the objective of being unambiguous. Assuming the meaning of words and phrases in a particular context (such as UK construction) and relying on others to have the same understanding is dangerous, and undoes one of the foundations of consensus-based national standards.

References and further reading.
Grenfell Tower Inquiry Day 6
March 2, 2020.

Grenfell Tower Inquiry Day 9
March 5, 2020.
Grenfell Tower Inquiry Day 14
March 16, 2020.
All available at:
https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/evidence [Accessed 1 June 2020]. [The Grenfell Tower Inquiry].