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Faces of Standardization

INTERVIEW WITH

CARLA SIROCCHI

Secretary of CEN/CLC/JTC 19

'Faces of standardization' is a series of monthly interviews to celebrate the 60th anniversary of CEN and CENELEC's collaboration. The objective is to give an overview of European standardization's successes through the people who made it possible.

This month's interview is with **CARLA SIROCCHI**, Technical Director at UNINFO, an associated body of UNI, Italy's Standardization Organization, and Secretary of recently established CEN and CENELEC's Joint Technical Committee (JTC) 19 'Blockchain and Distributed Ledger Technologies'.

1. Please, present yourself. To what extent are you involved in standardization?

UNINFO is the Associated Body to whom UNI (the Italian Standardization Organization) has delegated the Information Technologies field. I have been working in UNINFO for the last 31 years, first as a Committee Manager and more recently as Technical Director managing the whole UNINFO technical activity. Among the current hot topics followed by UNINFO I should mention Blockchain, the coding of moving pictures and audio, ICT Professionalism, eInvoice, and Artificial intelligence.

2. What are, according to you, the benefits of European standardization?

Standards have a wide impact on society, in particular on the safety and well-being of citizens, the environment, workers' safety and working conditions, accessibility and other areas of public importance.

The benefits of standards for European industry are extensive. Standards help manufacturers reduce costs, anticipate technical requirements, and increase productive and innovative efficiency. Standards especially contribute to:

- promote the competitiveness of enterprises (in particular SMEs) by facilitating the free movement of goods and services, network interoperability, media, technological development and innovation.
- remove technical barriers to trade, increase market access and international trade, and enhance cooperation at the international level.

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Not only standards are important to the industry, they also help to address major social challenges such as climate change, the sustainable use of resources, innovation, an ageing population, the integration of people with disabilities, consumer protection, workers' and working conditions.

3. Which are the main evolutions and milestones that you saw happen in the European Standardization System over the years?

The implementation of standards in industry and commerce became highly important with the onset of the Industrial Revolution and the need for high-precision machine tools and interchangeable parts.

Henry Maudslay developed the first industrially practical screw-cutting lathe in 1800. This allowed for the standardization of screw thread sizes for the first time and paved the way for the practical application of interchangeability to nuts and bolts. This was a major advance in workshop technology, as differences in standards between companies was making trade increasingly difficult and strained.

Since then, the need to cooperate in order to optimise trade made it necessary to enable organisations to use the same instruments without running into many difficulties.

A lot has changed since then. As the industrial and commercial world has evolved, so has standardization, by implementing the rules for writing and disseminating standards to all users.

In my thirty years of experience, I have seen a growing awareness that only by sharing one's knowledge can one achieve goals that satisfy the majority of users, which in turn contribute to improving the standards development system.

4. How do you believe standardization will evolve in the next 60 years?

The new challenges are now also being played out in the field of responsible and sustainable development, the involvement of small and micro enterprises and professionals, the extension of the concept of security to the whole social sphere, but - above all - synergies with the future national and European legislative framework.

Sustainability, quality and safety are the key objectives that standardization can only pursue through greater participation of all stakeholders in the process of defining technical standards.

The relationship between standardization, legislation and public authorities is one of the main strategic lines we are all working on, both at national and international level.

Furthermore, European standards must increasingly support the competitiveness of European businesses in the global market, facilitating access to foreign markets and the establishment of business partnerships around the globe.

5. Could you please tell us an anecdote from your career in standardization that you believe is indicative?

The MPEG coding standards are a good example. MPEG (Moving Picture Experts Group) is the acronym for a family of technological standards that represent audiovisual content in numerical-digital form (i.e. in bit form). It is also the name of the international group of experts, technicians and researchers belonging to the major companies in the telecommunications, broadcasting, software, consumer electronics sectors that meet periodically to develop and define these standards.

A working group that grew up fast: from the 25 participants of the first meeting, held in May 1988, to over 450 experts from some 200 companies and organisations from over 20 countries who regularly attend MPEG meetings.

In Italy we have hosted this large group several times. It was an incredible experience: a great teamwork that allowed us to provide all the necessary support for the success of the meetings that saw up to 550 experts from all over the planet.

6. What advice would you like to share with new generations interested in standardization?

Standardization means patience, diplomacy and human relations.

If I were young and interested in starting a career in standardization, I would first choose a technical field I like and build a sound background, in order to contribute technically to standard making.

More information on the 'Faces of Standardization' interview campaign can be found at the following link:
https://www.cencenelec.eu/News/Brief_News/Pages/TN-2020-031.aspx