Faces of Standardization

INTERVIEW WITH

BETTY XU

SECONDED EUROPEAN STANDARDIZATION EXPERT IN CHINA (SESEC)

'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 **BETTY XU**, the Seconded European Standardization Expert in China (SESEC).

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

My name is Betty Xu and I am the Seconded European Standardization Expert in China (SESEC). SESEC is a project supported and operated by the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC) and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), as well as by the European Commission's Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and Industry (EC DG GROW) and by the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). The China (SESEC) project was launched in May 2006, with the third phase (SESEC III) running from 2014-2018 and the fourth phase (SESEC IV) from 2018 to 2021.

I have 14 years' working experience on standardization. My involvement with standardization started in 2006, first as the R&D leader and main standards drafter in a big household appliance company in China (2006-2008), then as standardization Director for China and northern-East Asia in a giant European electrical equipment manufacturer (2008-2013). Finally, before becoming the SESEC expert in September 2014, I had been working for Standards Australia in Sydney since 2013. I was the drafting leader for several China national standards and key drafter of 2 IEC standards during my career.

As SESEC expert, my key mission is to enhance the visibility of European standardization activities in China, increase the cooperation between Chinese and European standardization bodies and support European companies facing standardization-related issues hampering market access to China.

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

To my eyes, "Standardization", as commonly agreed technical solutions and evaluation tools, has many globally agreed benefits on product safety, technology, trade, and innovation. European standardization has all these benefits and besides these, it contributes even more to the European Union.

The first great benefit of European standards is that they support the EU single market. I still remember when I was young, when we studied world history, economy and humanities subjects in China, there was no solid concept of European Union. Nowadays, the EU, as an united economic entity and a harmonized Single Market, becomes more and more important politically and economically in the world. "Standardization" obviously greatly contributed during this process: European standards are adopted and implemented harmoniously in 34 European countries, which greatly harmonised the EU Single Market. Based on it, European Standards support market-based competition and help ensure the interoperability of complementary products and services.

The other benefit I want to emphasise is that European standards enhance the European industry and services' competitiveness in international trade. The European Standardization Organizations (ESOs) bring together knowledge and expertise from their members, from business, industry and from other stakeholders, in order to develop European Standards for products, materials, services and processes. These European Standards encompass the latest techniques and technologies. When they are correctly

applied, European Standards ensure quality, performance and interoperability. Meanwhile, European standards are implemented in 34 EU countries, and via CEN/CENELEC/ETSI' international cooperation policy, they are also widely implemented in other non-European countries. All these put European industries in an advantageous position when they are doing international trade. It is not surprising at all to hear that some non-European countries asked their importers and suppliers to offer them the products or projects according to "European standards" or "CE marking" requirements.

Another unavoidable benefit of European standards is their role in protecting health, safety, security, and the environment. The EU promotes standards as a way to better regulation: European standards support EU regulations setting the mandatory and essential requirements on health, safety, security, and the environment, at the benefit of European consumers.

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

We are celebrating the 60th anniversary of CEN and CENELEC's collaboration, and I am not old enough to have seen all the history of European Standardization! However, I can share my personal opinions on the main evolutions and milestones of the European Standardization System.

First, the harmonization of European standards in 34 countries and the support to the Single Market, which has already been discussed in question 2.

Second, the introduction of the New Approach and later the "New Legislative Framework" (NLF), establishing standards as a tool for better regulation. In this evolution, regulations are mandatory, but standards remain voluntary. Voluntary standards support the essential requirements inside the regulations, which from my eyes, is great progress on protecting the health, safety, security, and the environment while leaving flexibility to include technical innovation. Many other countries are still either heavily counting on regulations making all the detailed requirements, or on mandatory standards. Regulations and standards are not really working together at all in many other countries, while in the EU, the NLF showed the strength of such combination, providing a best practice all over the world.

Last but not least, the release of "Regulation (EU) No. 1025/2012" and "The Joint Initiative on Standardisation". Regulation (EU) No. 1025/2012 can be considered as the "European Standardization Law", as it lays down the rules governing cooperation between ESOs, National Standardization Bodies (NSBs), Member States and the European Commission. It also regulates the establishment of European standards and other standardization deliverables for products and services in support of the EU legislation and

policies and the identification of ICT technical specifications eligible for referencing. The financing of European standardization and stakeholder participation in European standardization are also covered. Regulation (EU) No. 1025/2012 is the foundation of European Standardization systems while "The Joint Initiative on Standardization" is its reinforcement.

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

Due to the technology development and globalization, there will be more harmonized standards all over the world in the next 60 years to support product and technology interoperability and international trade. Although politically there are many voices and trends of "de-globalization" and "de-coupling", in the perspectives of standardization, harmonized standards and international standards are still the direction we are heading to. "One standard, one test, accepted anywhere" is still the trend.

Meanwhile, standards drafting itself and standardization management will be more digitalised in the near future, with Artificial Intelligence playing a key role in standards drafting, coordination and harmonization.

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

As SESEC, I have always worked with the EU Delegation to China and CEN and CENELEC a lot. I remember that once we needed to draft a letter to the Chinese governmental organization dealing with standards. I coordinated with the above two organizations, and after several rounds of modifications and discussions we completed the documents. Then before we sent out the document, I accidently asked one of the officers if we could claim a "Common European Principle". The officer said: "Betty, if you want a Common European Principle, usually it will take another six months".

This anecdote shows the often time-consuming process to reach consensus in the EU. Also standardization work needs a lot of time to reach consensus: the ESOs make a lot of efforts to consult and include their members and stakeholders, which is a very good thing. But on the other side, to meet the pace of current digital technology developments, the standardization process in a lot of sectors in Europe needs to be accelerated and become quicker.

I believe the ESOs, thanks to the collective effort and dedication of their members, will find an effective and efficient way to speed up the consensus process.

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