Standards Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – In Particular SDG 13 – Ireland

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a call for action to promote prosperity while protecting the planet, and they provide the blueprint on how to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all while addressing the global challenges we face. NSAI (National Standards Authority of Ireland) is Ireland’s National Standards Body (NSB) and a national member of the European Standards Committees CEN, CENELEC, & ETSI and international organizations ISO and IEC.

At a national policy level, Innovation 2020 and Enterprise 2025 emphasise the importance of standards as a source of competitive advantage to help Ireland fulfil its ambition to become a ‘Global Innovation Leader’, and state that ‘Irish-based enterprises must embed standards in their research, development and testing processes’. Future Jobs Ireland 2019 positions NSAI as a bridge between standards and Irish business – small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and larger. It supports national technical experts to engage with international standards development.

NSAI’s Strategic Plan 2016-2020 recognizes that as trade takes new forms, through global value chains and shared challenges such as climate protection, finding sustainable solutions that enable the dispersal of new technology and innovation are increasingly important.

An example of this is the standardisation of ICT. This provides a basis for the integration of diverse technologies into complex, innovative systems and solutions, and assists in ensuring interoperability between smart products and services – a critical role in a world undergoing digital transformation across all industries and sectors. There are also opportunities for more specific applications to support the SDGs, such as the use of

- A.I. in:
  - Energy (SDG 7)
  - Smart Cities (SDG 11)
  - Food waste management (SDG 12)
  - Climate modelling (SDG 13)
  - Species protection (SDG 14 and 15).

With a high level of presence of ICT software and technology companies, Ireland is well placed to contribute to shaping future global standards. As such, and aligned to the Future Jobs Ireland 2019, NSAI is prioritising wider and deeper roles for Irish standardisation participants to put Ireland at the forefront of developing technologies. For example, at the request of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, NSAI has established a ‘Top Team for Standards on AI bringing together national experts to expand Ireland’s international leadership in AI Standards development and to increase standards-enabled impact.

Standards also have a key role to play in supporting the construction sector to adhere to the Sustainable Development Goals, the EU Green Deal objectives and to Ireland’s emissions targets. The Government’s Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2019 underscores the importance for ‘the Built Environment of improving the energy efficiency of our buildings, including our homes, workplaces and schools by meeting higher energy performance Standards and by increasing retrofit activity.’
CAP 2019 put in place a wide-ranging decarbonisation pathway to 2030. In October 2020 the Government also published a draft Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill, which would commit Ireland to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050. Climate action – SDG 13 – has never been higher up the agenda, and standards have an important role to play.

Existing standards like ISO 14001 Environmental Management and ISO 50001 Energy Management cover all aspects of energy savings, water and air quality. They provide a systematic framework to support organisations to minimise their environmental footprint and provide accurate methods of measurement. Their broad use helps reduce the environmental impact of industrial production and processes, facilitates the reuse of limited resources and improves energy efficiency.

There are also important opportunities for strategic collaboration and support. For example, under the CAP 2019, working in partnership with other public organisations, NSAI is managing the production of standards deliverables to support climate actions, including under:

- **CAP Action 75**: Develop an NSAI Standards programme to support climate action policy, focusing initially on supporting the supply chain for renewables, retrofitting and climate adaptation
  - Standards deliverable: Guidance for EV Chargers under the National Rules for Electrical Installations
    - Status: complete

- **CAP Action 66**: Roadmap to develop supply chain to support the phase-out of fossil fuel boilers in new dwellings
  - Standards deliverable: S.R. 50-4:2021 – Heat pump systems for dwellings
    - Status: ongoing

- **CAP Action 60**: Effectively Ban the installation of oil boilers from 2022 and the installation of gas boilers from 2025 in all new dwellings through the introduction of new regulatory standards for home heating systems, and ensure the supply chain for the installation of renewable heating systems is in place
  - Standards deliverable: S.R. in 2021 – Solar photovoltaic systems for dwellings
    - Status: ongoing.

The potential of standards to tangibly contribute to the SDGs is significant. In 2019 alone, NSAI published more than 1,500 standards, including in the areas of Innovation Management and Design for All. In 2018 NSAI joined standards bodies around the world in signing the UNECE Declaration on Gender Responsive Standards and Standards Development. NSAI continues to strengthen its understanding of the SDGs so that standards processes and deliverables can be viewed through the lens of sustainable development.

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