

EXPERT COMMENTARY

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 emphasized 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 positioned NSAI as a bridge between standards and Irish business – small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and larger. Supporting national technical experts to engage with international standards development. NSAI's Strategic Plan recognized 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 standardization 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 prioritizing wider and deeper roles for Irish standardization participants to put Ireland at the forefront of developing technologies. For example, at the request of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, NSAI 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 development of the built environment 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) 2021 put in place a wide-ranging decarbonization pathway to 2030. In July 2021 the Government passed the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill, which commits 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. CAP 2021 highlights that:



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'The transition to an energy efficient and fossil fuel free built environment will provide extensive social, economic and environmental benefits in the short- as well as long-term. This process will bring about reduced energy costs and more comfortable, healthier, safer, and less costly to heat and cool, homes enhancing our living standards, improving our air quality and helping to address energy poverty. It will also improve energy security and reduce Ireland's dependence on fossil fuels in addition to other significant co-benefits for the environment and socio-economic development.'

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 organizations to minimize 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. The development of standards also provides important opportunities for strategic collaboration and support. For example, under the CAP 2021, working in partnership with other public organizations, NSAI manages the production of certain standards deliverables to support climate actions, including under:

CAP Action 138: Publish a standard recommendation for the design, installation, and commissioning of solar PV panels in new and existing dwellings

- o Standards deliverable: S.R. 55:2021 Solar photovoltaic micro-generators for dwellings - design, installation, commissioning and maintenance
 - § Status: complete

CAP Action 161: Publish an Irish Standard to enable organizations apply a systematic approach to energy efficient design throughout the various steps of design, construction, and commissioning of investment projects

- o Standards deliverable: I.S. 399:2021 Energy efficient design - Requirements with guidance for use
 - § Status: complete

CAP Action 225: Update the energy efficient retrofit of dwellings guidance document

- o Standards deliverable: S.R.54 Code of practice for the energy efficient retrofit of dwellings
 - § Status: ongoing as of Feb 2022.

The potential of standards to tangibly contribute to the SDGs is significant. Each year, NSAI publish an average of almost 2,000 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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