

SMEST Workshop in Iceland

The SMEST Workshop was held at the Grand Hotel in Reykjavik on 7 December 2012. About 40 people took part in the workshop.

The Convenor of the workshop was **Mr Davíð Lúðvíksson** from the Federation of Icelandic Industries (Director, Sector Groups, Service and Development).

Participants in the panel discussion were:

Mr Bergsteinn Einarsson, representing Set, which produces steel, plastic and copper pipes in three factories, two in Iceland and one in Germany (<http://setpipes.com/site/>). The competition on the Icelandic market increased after the EEA Agreement came into force in 1994, and Bergsteinn has no doubt that the company would not have survived if it had not implemented an ISO 9001 quality system and had it certified. They had started to expand their market beyond Iceland before the 2008 bank crash (in 2009 their turnover decreased by 46%). Their products are tested and CE-marked. The factory in Germany produces mostly for the Scandinavian and Benelux markets, as the German market is very closed and requires additional testing and marking.

Mr Eyjólfur Bjarnason, representing ÍAV, which is a leading company in all fields of construction, in design and development as well as the actual building process of a wide variety of building projects (<http://www.iav.is/english/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-70/>). ÍAV also produces CE-marked aggregates for concrete. Eyjólfur says that when they were building Harpa, the new concert hall and conference centre, all the steel structures came from China and then it proved really useful to refer to Icelandic (and European) standards for minimum requirements. On site, they use personal protective equipment that conforms to standards. ÍAV has an ISO 9001 certified quality system which they find very useful and has increased their competitiveness. Standards can be a burden but mostly they provide opportunities.

Mr Jón Þór Ólafsson, representing Marel, which is a worldwide leading supplier of advanced equipment, systems and services to the fish, meat and poultry processing industries (<http://www.marel.com>). Jón Þór has been with Marel since the very beginning, back in the 1980's, when the company grew out of a university project. They did not know much about standards in the beginning, when their only product was scales to be used on board ships. Cost saving is not a motivation in using standards, rather it is the fact that standards set the framework for all their manufacturing, be it stainless steel, electrical or mechanical equipment, electronics, hygiene or other aspects. Marel is ISO 9001 certified but it is debated every 2-3 years whether that is worthwhile. As for standards, the company would not survive without using them.

Mr Haraldur Bjarnason, representing Auðkenni, which provides individuals and companies with electronic communications security solutions (<http://www.audkenni.is/>),

Icelandic only). The IT industry is a very fast moving one with a lot of challenges and opportunities. Haraldur says that his company uses standards both in IT security and in outsourcing, and they have to comply with many standards in order to be allowed to operate. Icelandic stakeholders need to ensure that our interests are taken into account, e.g. the special Icelandic characters. We need to follow very closely the developments at European and international level. We can have our say even though we are a small country. We cooperate a lot with the other Nordic countries.

Ms Kolbrún Ottósdóttir, representing Nox Medical, which provides industry standard solutions for sleep monitoring and diagnostics (<http://www.noxmedical.com/>). As a manufacturer of medical equipment which is subject to strict rules everywhere, the company has an ISO 13485 certified quality system, CE-marks their products, and is registered in the USA and Canada and has applied for registration in China. There is no home market for the products. As standards around the world are different, Kolbrún sees standards as a burden, but also as an opportunity. Product surveillance authorities trust the company better because of the quality system, but it is also a requirement by many customers. The case of the PIP breast implants has shown the importance of following the rules. We all benefit from the regulations and standards, even though we might sometimes perceive them as burdensome.

There were some discussions and exchange of experiences with the participation of the audience. A machinery manufacturer said that their ISO 9001 certified quality system helped quite a lot in the CE-marking process, besides increasing the competitiveness both in Iceland and abroad. Representatives of authorities stressed the importance of using standards, but remarked that sometimes certificates and marking does not tell the whole story (again referring to the case of the breast implants). Ethical behaviour and social responsibility is called for.

The conclusion of the workshop was that nobody uses standards unless they have to, but those who do realize that standards are not just a burden, but provide a lot of advantages and opportunities.

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