

A world without standards is inconceivable

The future firmly in sight: DIN creates trust in a networked world

Industry and society as a whole are changing: Sustainable action, digital transformation, artificial intelligence – those are just some of the many current topics that move us every day and bring new challenges. DIN does its part in facing these challenges and in creating trust in a networked world. Together with industry, research and society as a whole, DIN plays a role in paving the way for innovations to reach the market and advancing progress in innovative areas. DIN, the German Institute for Standardization, is the independent, privately organized platform for standardization in Germany and worldwide.

With its work mandated by the Federal Republic of Germany, DIN brings stakeholders to the table and organizes German representation of interests in European and international standardization. Christoph Winterhalter, DIN Executive Board Chairman, explains the role of DIN like this: "The driving forces behind standardization are industry and society. The catalyst for standards projects come from them. The motivation to develop a standard arises naturally when there is an existing gap that needs to be filled – whether it is for the quality of products or services, to facilitate trade, bring innovative ideas on the market or to advance progress in cutting-edge areas. We orchestrate the dialogue and ensure that the interests of all stakeholders and relevant protection targets are taken into account in a balanced manner; for example, with regard to consumer protection, the environment or occupational health and safety."

When industry robots understand the language of their counterparts, when new doors and windows fit into existing frames or when children's clothing is designed to prevent cords from leading to tragic accidents – it is almost always thanks to a standard. Yes, the use of standards is voluntary, but it is often common practice because this offers so many significant advantages: more efficient processes, better and safer products and last but not least, more legal security. Many laws do require that manufacturers adhere to the recognized technical rules. In the case of legal disputes, the use of a standard is often viewed in a positive light. Standardization work is a clear

boost for the economy. According to multiple, independent studies, standards contribute between 15 and 20 billion Euro per year to the economy and have a stabilizing effect on the growth of the German economy.

The goal is consensus

The German Standardization Strategy, first developed in 2004, provides the foundation for DIN's work. This document sets out the goals of standardization, such as the facilitation of international and European trade. The current version, which is available on DIN's website, was developed in 2016 by all relevant stakeholders in Germany. DIN's project managers are specially trained to provide professional project management to the standards-making process – from the standards proposal all the way to publication. They support the working committees developing a new standard and can answer any questions they may have. For example, the project managers ensure that our standards are consistent and not in conflict with any existing standards or European legislation and that all relevant stakeholders are involved in the process. DIN's working committees are made up of experts representing stakeholders from all areas of interest, such as industry, research, the public sector and consumer interest groups. In addition, DIN provides the necessary tools for standards projects, like online portals and information material. DIN's modern building in Berlin, located at *DIN-Platz* (DIN Plaza) has a modern conference center, with well-equipped meeting rooms. Beuth Verlag, a subsidiary of DIN, is responsible for the publication of all DIN Standards. For many participants, the direct contact with fellow colleagues in these working committees is a highly-valued benefit. Whoever participates in a standardization project is automatically part of an important network. Not only are future standards users sitting next to one another in these standards committees, but also potential customers. Approximately 36,000 experts are currently bringing their expertise to work on standardization projects managed by DIN.

The work done in these working committees using a consensus-based process ultimately leads to the development of a standard. Each standard is reviewed no later than five years after publication for review and is revised when needed, or sometimes withdrawn. Standards are living, breathing documents and do not necessarily remain valid forever. Anyone can submit

a proposal for a standards project directly via DIN's website. Yet industry remains the driving force behind the majority of new standards. This was also the case in 1918, when the first DIN Standard was published: DIN 1, *Taper pins*. As a non-profit registered association pursuant to the public good, DIN finances its activities through various sources. In 2020, approximately 61.8 % was derived from DIN's own income (e.g. the sale of standards), 19.4 % from external sources such as project funds from industry, 8.9 % from the public sector and 9.9 % from membership fees.

Standards set the course

Currently, there are close to 34,000 standards in the German body of standards DIN continues to focus on the future: Standardization has never been more essential. DIN promotes the marketability of innovative solutions through standardization, be it in areas such as the digitization of industry and society, or within the framework of research programmes. Current issues in these subject areas can only be tackled with common understanding through standards and specifications. This will increasingly require a cross-sectoral perspective and cooperation. This is where DIN can bring its strengths to bear, with its more than 100 years' experience. DIN professionals in the individual standards bodies can quickly bring together the right expertise for the standardization of such overarching and complex areas. Roadmaps, developed as a collaborative effort and available free of charge, not only lead the way but also create security and trust with users. Speed is increasingly playing a role here. "Innovations are being churned out at speeds not seen before. Whether or not an idea is successful depends on how long it takes to reach the market. That is why we are moving at a rapid pace in standardization", said Christoph Winterhalter. DIN, as a privately organized provider of standardization services, aims to orient itself to the requirements of its partners from industry and society. A key part of achieving this objective is the DIN SPEC, or the "small standard" which is an effective way of developing specifications even more quickly. "A DIN SPEC is the fastest way for turning research into a marketable product. Smaller working groups are able to develop a DIN SPEC in just a few months," explains Dr. Michael Stephan, a member of DIN's Management Board heading the Standardization Division. "Innovative companies and start-ups can really profit from this process. Participation in these working groups also offers an additional perk, which is the chance to exchange ideas and

network with other market participants.” A DIN SPEC can also later form the basis of a DIN Standard.

Maintaining a competitive edge

For DIN and its partners from industry, technical associations, research, the public and the public sector, a great deal of topics remain on the agenda. Ultimately it is about nothing less than the competitive position of Germany on the international stage. Christoph Winterhalter stresses: “We cannot allow ourselves to lose our competitive edge internationally when it comes to standardization in innovative areas. Companies that are paving the way now for artificial intelligence will be playing a key role here in the future.” Policymakers and industry representatives would likely agree with this statement. Experience has shown that if a rapidly developed national standard has proven to be successful, the chances that it will be used throughout the EU and even worldwide increase. Companies who have helped to shape a specification can gear their processes, products or services accordingly right from the outset; this gives them a knowledge lead that should not be underestimated when bringing this standard to the international level. Whether it is a medium-sized enterprise or a large company, participation in standards work can be a strategic tool that drives success. Christoph Winterhalter views DIN as a service provider: “If we have made it possible for our members to participate in an effective standardization dialogue, we have fulfilled our mission.”



Christoph Winterhalter, DIN Executive Board Chairman **Figure: DIN**



The inner courtyard of the DIN building **Figure: DIN**

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About DIN

DIN, the German Institute for Standardization, is the independent platform for standardization in Germany and worldwide. As a partner for industry, research and society as a whole, DIN plays a major role in helping innovations to reach the market in areas such as the digital economy or society, often within the framework of research projects. More than 36.000 experts from industry, research, consumer protection and the public sector bring their expertise to work on standardization projects managed by DIN. The result of these efforts are market-oriented standards and specifications that promote global trade, encouraging rationalization, quality assurance, the protection of society and the environment, as well as improving security and communication. Additional information can be found at www.din.de

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