



Every two months, IECEx Chairman Prof. Dr. Thorsten Arnhold provides an update on developments within his organisation and the world of standards.

To write an article about the current status of international certification of products and services for use in hazardous areas without mentioning Brexit would be a serious oversight in these times.

At the moment, manufacturers and their clients in the European Union (still including the UK) are very confused about the future validity of ATEX certificates issued by UK Notified Bodies. Despite the fact that all big UK Notified Bodies are in very close communication with their European customers and are trying hard to provide acceptable solutions, there is still uncertainty and nobody knows what difficulties will have to be faced in the coming months and years.

As the chairman of the IECEx system, I could take a relaxed view of the situation and propose that our UK friends open their markets directly for products with IECEx certificates, as their Australian relatives have done for many years.

But as a representative of a German manufacturer I am sad and angry about this situation. It will cost the industry

Brexit and the future

a lot of money and time, without any improvement in safety. Money and time which European industry would be far better spending facing up to international competition.

I am also sad and angry as a European citizen who is convinced that the UK is a very important part of Europe and the European Union and should stay inside. But I am still hoping that there will be a positive outcome.

Nor should we forget the important contribution the British have had on the development of safety methods and technologies for hazardous areas. The very first explosion protected equipment was invented in 1815 by Sir Humphry Davy, a famous scientist and colleague of Sir Henry Cavendish at the Royal Society in London. Davy and his assistant George Stevenson developed the Davy lamp, an oil lamp with a special safety mesh which saved the lives of thousands of miners over the following decades.

He also discovered the effects of laughing gas on human beings, something we might all benefit from when considering the strange developments of our times!

But back to explosion protection - another huge contribution was the development of a new and very important protection method following a disastrous explosion at a pit in Wales in 1913 which led to the death of 439 miners. The subsequent investigation identified an electric spark in the mine signalling system as the cause of the accident, following which British scientists developed the concept of intrinsic safety, today one of the most widespread methods of explosion protection worldwide.

I could continue with this list but these examples must suffice. I should also add how much I have appreciated collaborating with my many British colleagues in the standardisation and conformity assessment community, and I look forward to this continuing long into the future at IEC and IECEx.

I recently discovered another interesting fact. In 1912 the first international conference on explosion protection in mining took place in Pittsburgh, USA, with experts present from Belgium, Germany, France, Austria and the USA.

Two years before the First World War began, in which millions of young people killed each other, experts from the same countries exchanged knowledge on how to save the lives of miners.

Human history is full of such strange stories.

So I am convinced that the work carried out by international organisations such as IEC and IECEx is vital, not just for more efficient business and safe workplaces, for also for the freedom and improved welfare of people everywhere.

In 2019, we will continue with the successful development of our international certification system together with our friends from the UK.

In May we come together in different working groups and in the executive group in Singapore, and in September we will have our annual Management Committee meeting in Dubai. At this meeting my successor as chairman of IECEx will be elected, and at the end of 2019 my second term will be over. Until then there is a certain way to go, and a few more columns in Hazardex to write! ■