



Every two months, Prof. Dr. Thorsten Arnhold, IECEx Chairman 2014-2019, provides an update on developments within the organisation.

With my new function as the German delegate at the Conformity Assessment Board (CAB), I learn more and more about the broad spectrum of knowledge-related services that the IEC is offering via its website www.iec.com. For people who are interested in the latest developments of technologies in electronics or electro-technique, electro-technical standardisation and conformity assessments, there are numerous sources of information. The best thing is that they are mainly free of charge!

One of my favourite aspects of the website is the IEC whitepapers. Produced by international teams of experts, they offer insights into topical subjects such as artificial intelligence, edge intelligence, smart factories and smart grids. If you take the time to study these 80- or 90-page documents, you can gain a comprehensive overview about state-of-the-art technologies.

For those who want a comprehensive overview about a specific field of standardisation or conformity assessment, I recommend our e-tech magazine. This paper is published six times per year and each issue focuses on a specific trend and aspect of industry. Topics like standards for safety and security, the interconnection of sustainability and development goals of the UNO with the

IEC offers much more than standards and certificates

standardisation and conformity assessment activities of IEC, or smart machines for modern efficient agriculture are presented in series of informative articles. For me, it is always surprising how colleagues at the IEC communication department transform sober and dry technical writing into engaging and fascinating stories.

For the last couple of years, the knowledge transfer from IEC to the internal and external community is run by a dedicated organisation: the IEC Academy & Capacity Building (ACB).

The IEC organisation mainly consists of a strong network of experts. These experts are working voluntarily and temporarily in numerous technical committees, sub-committees, working groups and maintenance teams for the standard generation and conformity assessment. To achieve a high consistency and quality of work, it is essential that at least the officers and convenors of the organisational units have sufficient knowledge and skills about the basic rules and procedures. To ensure this happens is one of the tasks undertaken by the IEC Academy. In 2019, the IEC Academy offered intensive two-day training programmes to all new TC/SC Chairs and Secretaries. Here the new Chairs and Secretaries gain first-hand information and best practice from the department heads and build effective working relationships with the Technical Department staff in the central office in Geneva.

When a country decides to become an IEC member, online training sessions are organised to prepare the former affiliate country for IEC membership. In these training sessions, hands-on training on processes and rules is given as well as practical tips on how to establish an effective national structure and how to choose observer and participating membership status in IEC TC/SCs. Similar training programmes have

been established for affiliate countries. There are also specific training programmes for assorted countries and regions.

Since 2018, webinars have been offered to the general public at www.iec.ch/academy. Recordings and slides of the webinars are available on the Academy archive section of the IEC website. New topics, which are related to IEC standardisation and conformity assessment and of interest for a larger audience, can be proposed by the community and are integrated in new webinar programmes.

Our experiences with all Academy activity have been very positive. The number of attendees to all our training formats is continuously growing which speaks for the high interest in standardisation and conformity assessment. It is interesting to also mention that the travel restrictions due to COVID-19 gave our online training activities an additional push.

The IEC Academy & Capacity Building is currently in the process of developing an online learning management system that will allow participants to take courses online. This new platform will be composed of courses on topics such as standardisation and conformity assessment as well as on the requirements of specific IEC roles such as Convenors, Secretaries, and Chairs.

Each course is comprised of several modules that, once successfully completed, allow participants to receive online recognition and a certificate. National Committees will be able to see in the IEC Expert Management System which of their experts has successfully completed a course.

For me, it is exciting to see that all these activities are developing the IEC from a pure standard organisation to a worldwide acting competence network dealing with all the major challenges of our time. ■