

Euralarm supports European services standard for Fire Safety and Security Systems

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The CEN/CENELEC/TC4 project committee has been working since 2011 on a standard that defines the quality of services provided for fire safety and security systems. It is anticipated that the final vote for this standard will take place in the first half of 2016. In light of the European Services Directive, the endeavour of companies to be and to remain competitive, especially when costs rise can have an adverse effect on quality. That is why Euralarm believes this standard is of utmost importance and strongly supports it.

Lance Rütimann from Euralarm explains: "This European standard lays out the minimum quality requirements for the service providers. It defines basic levels of competence of the employees entrusted with the planning, design, assembly, commissioning, system verification, handover or maintenance of fire safety or security systems. Further it defines minimum requirements on the service output and documentation". This applies irrespective of whether these services are provided on-site or via remote access. It applies to services for fire safety systems and/or security systems, which are fire detection and fire alarm systems, fixed firefighting systems and alarm systems and to combinations of such systems including those parts of an alarm transmission system for which the service provider has contractually accepted responsibility. Social alarm systems and alarm receiving centres are not included.

Changing markets

The use of the Internet for procurement coupled with the opening up of the European service market is bringing about fundamental changes:

- Today's customers use the Internet to gain information and build an opinion before contacting vendors. Service providers with a recognized European quality mark will most likely remain in the short list whilst others will drop through.
- The Internet also enables service providers to get access to new customers and to new geographical areas, without incurring significant increases in marketing and sales costs.
- Changes in the environment surrounding markets can inadvertently lead to negative impacts for market participants. Measures are needed to counter act this.

This is where this European services standard can provide consistency of quality whilst still allowing for market developments to take their normal course

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Opportunities and challenges

Assuming that the prEN16763 Services Standard will be introduced in the latter part of this year, this brings about certain market opportunities and challenges. Lance Rütimann says: “Once a service provider has completed the certification procedure successfully in one member state, the approval process to attain certification in another member state will be in general simplified”. This gives better access to new customers, but service providers might also find themselves faced with new competitors in their current geographical market. Euralarm urges that this increased competitiveness should and must not occur at the expense of quality.

The services standard lays out a constant and uniform quality level for all services. Valid, documented certification will help safety and security officers to carry out their assessments of service providers’ suitability, irrespective of what type of service is to be provided. This demands that specialist employees have up-to-date knowledge, which can be verified at any time. The standard also provides a basis for assessing service providers in terms of competence and experience in implementation.

Not only the industry, but also certifying bodies will notice a difference due to this new standard. Currently, not every country has national standards for the provision of services on fire safety and/or security systems. The three main impacts that will be felt are:

- Certification carried out in accordance with the prEN16763 will be pan-European. National certification schemes will need to be adapted.
- Companies with valid certification from one member state will not generally require a full-scale certification. Two exceptions will be:
 - demonstrating knowledge of and competency in the use of the applicable application guidelines, which are in most cases national.
 - if the company is applying to provide a different service and/or for a different technology than what is in the existing certification.

“Euralarm is currently working together with a number of certifying bodies on the issue of how to achieve a common certification in Europe,” Rütimann continues.

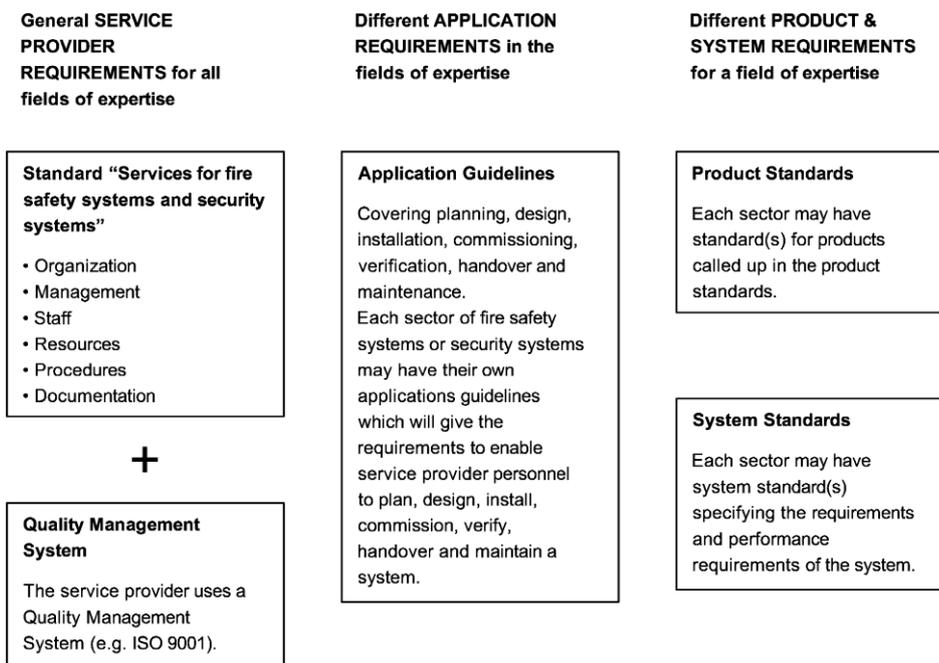
Holistic approach

As mentioned the services standard covers all services: planning, design, installation, commissioning, system verification and handover. It requires coordination between the various services providers. The interfaces between the various entities involved are taken into account in the standard. This helps to counter reductions in quality and avoid non-conformance costs. Further, the stage “system verification” ensures that an installed and commissioned system meets the requirements as defined in the planning and design documents.

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Rütimann states: “The standard also entails a holistic approach to customers, irrespective of the services they require nor the size or complexity of their fire safety and/or security system(s).” The level of reliability, resilience and availability of a system over time are directly dependent on maintenance, which consists of regular inspection, repair, replacement of worn out parts and improvement. Anyone carrying out maintenance must demonstrate their ability and competence to cover these four parts. He continues: “When the standard is implemented customers can expect measurable criteria in terms of competence, expertise and quality for these four parts. Even if they only require one part, there would be a causal effect, which would have a positive influence on the whole of the system.”

The other holistic aspect is how this standard fits into the European standards landscape. The following graphic gives an overview:



Quality and stability

The fire safety and security industry plays a significant role in working towards avoiding economic losses caused by quality problems with fire safety and other security systems. The tangible costs for loss of lives, injuries and damages to assets would increase by a magnitude in the area of billions of Euros, if fire safety and security systems were not installed and maintained by professionals.

European standards create stability in the market for suppliers and purchasers. A European services standard would provide both a stable basis for a minimum standard of competence, expertise and quality in companies and also for fair competition. Euralarm strongly believes that increased competition should and must not lead to a reduction in the quality of the services provided and that the prEN 16763 European services standard can be a significant enabler towards this objective.

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About Euralarm

Euralarm represents the electronic fire and security industry, providing leadership and expertise for industry, market, policy makers and standards bodies. Our members make society safer and secure through systems and services for fire detection, intrusion detection, access control, video monitoring, alarm transmission and alarm receiving centres. Founded in 1970, Euralarm represents over 5000 companies with an estimated cumulated revenue of 18 bn Euros. Euralarm members are national associations and individual companies from more than 17 European countries.

More information

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