UNIFE

UNIFE represents the European Rail Industry in Brussels since 1992. The Association gathers over 95 of Europe’s leading large and medium-sized rail supply companies active in the design, manufacture, maintenance and refurbishment of rail transport systems, subsystems and related equipment. UNIFE also brings together 14 national rail industry associations of European countries. UNIFE members have an 84% market share in Europe and supply 46% of the worldwide production of rail equipment and services.

IRIS Certification™

IRIS (International Railway Industry Standard) Certification™ promotes high quality throughout the rail supply industry through the implementation of a global system for the evaluation of companies supplying the rail industry.

IRIS Certification™ aims to improve the quality and reliability of the rail products, to implement and further develop a global system for the evaluation of companies supplying the rail sector, and to instill a culture of quality throughout the sector.

With more than 1600 companies IRIS-certified worldwide, the system is now an international seal of quality, increasingly recognised by rail operators and manufacturers alike. The IRIS Certification™ rev.03 system was developed by rail sector stakeholders and is managed by the IRIS Management Centre.
Dear reader,

One year ago, UNIFE launched the IRIS Certification™ rev. 03. Not only is this a new version but also a full new concept: the technical requirements are backed by the global rail sector within ISO, and the assessment methodology as well as the certification process are still managed by the current industrial stakeholders.

Moreover, the expectations around this evolution are very high. As the manufacturing industry, we have to demonstrate our commitment towards product quality through the performance level of our sites and organisations. Therefore, the trust in our innovation and production capacity will be measured considering the quality of the parts we deliver.

I strongly believe that this is the only way for our industry to face the upcoming challenges, whether they are economic within our European market or strategical in a global competition. The quality of products was never an issue for the European industry, as the satisfaction of our customers was our ultimate target. Nevertheless, we must not overlook the need for progression and should continuously focus on improvement and quality in order to stay level with our own expectations and with our competitors.

12 years ago, we designed the IRIS scheme, tailor-made and dedicated it to our future improvements. Let’s not miss the opportunity to apply our best practices first for our benefit and for the acceptance of all our customers.

This General Assembly in Warsaw will be the start of new opportunities with the operators, which we welcome with open arms. By offering the right quality to our customers, we will grow, be more reliable and more competitive.

On behalf of myself, the UNIFE and IRIS teams, I wish you a very pleasant time in Warsaw.

With best regards,

Philippe Citroën
UNIFE Director General
Dipl. Ing. Ralf Letzel has been in the last 17 years in various specialist and management positions at Weidmüller, in the areas of Business Excellence, Process Management, Business analysis as well as the integration of different system requirements, Norms and standards in the global Process organisation. He also looks after various locations.

Weidmüller and the railway industry

Weidmüller works closely with national and international rail industry manufacturers to meet the demands of mobility through innovative and customized solutions. The increasing demands on mobility, comfort, speed and cost, increase the number of modular electronic systems. Whether for rail vehicles, stationary systems such as signal boxes or signal systems, Weidmüller has been providing efficient, reliable and secure connections for a wide range of system components in the railway industry for decades.

What were the backgrounds?
The initiative wasn’t a result of an incentive to be the first company with a new IRIS certificate based on the international standard ISO/TS 22163, but rather from a rational and purposeful decision by Weidmüller. The company has been operating an integrated management system since the beginning of 2003. In order to achieve in the coming years a timely alignment of all standards (ISO 9001, 14001, 50001, ...) certification and surveillance audits, we decided to implement the IRIS rev. 03 transition audit as early as possible, after the ISO 9001:2015, while still respecting the IRIS rules.

How did you feel about the changeover process?
At the time of the IRIS rev. 03 audit based on the ISO/TS 22163, Weidmüller had already fulfilled the extended requirements of ISO 9001:2015 and thus possessed an important building block of ISO/TS 22163, since in principle all the requirements of this standard apply here. The good coordination and support by our certification partner DEKRA Certification was also helpful, as they were able to assess the management system and its maturity level more precisely than we ourselves can.

What, were the factors of success?
As with the first certification in 2008, it is crucial to understand business in the rail sector. A successful and meaningful process integration can only be achieved with a good understanding of the rail supplemental requirements of ISO/TS 22163 and the knowledge of our process efficiency. This process integration allows us to add only add-ons to our process landscape by avoiding duplications and minimizing employee misunderstanding. Weidmüller has already for many years a very mature integrated management system with the corresponding documentation. For example, each process and the associated management documentation can be accessed and viewed via our intranet. Process orientation has been an integral part of our corporate organisation since 2001. Process reviews have been conducted for a long time, as well as the management of process indicators for each of the approximately 100 processes in the integrated management system. It was equally helpful that Weidmüller had already integrated many of the new standard requirements into Business Process Management. An example of this is the global process model “Production Plants Worldwide”, which was released at the beginning of 2017. It covers all aspects of a global production site, including tool management, external partner control, logistics, quality management, etc.

How was your approach?
At the heart of the conversion was our internal cross-reference matrix. In this matrix we systematically combine all the requirements of ISO/TS 22163 with the explanations from the standard, with our own understanding and the reference to whether and how this point is already being implemented and which reference documents already exist. Where there is currently no satisfactory solution, this point is marked as “GAP” in the matrix. Thus, we were able to close very quickly and effectively existing “GAPs” and in each case develop a meaningful and sustainable solution with the employees. Combined with the existing high degree of maturity of the Weidmüller organisation, this was the decisive success factor for the rapid implementation of the new ISO/TS 22163 requirements.

Where do you see the challenges in the future?
Of course, it is important to further consolidate the new ISO/TS 22163 standard in the organizations. I see the topic of communication as a key success factor. Especially in times of globalization and the ever increasing digitization and the call for more agility is the topic of communication and a common understanding of the common processes are particularly important because processes no longer stop at the company premises but must be considered globally. The mere description and documentation in the supply chain or management system is no longer sufficient.

Weidmüller, first company to receive the new IRIS Certification™ rev. 03 certificate worldwide
Alstom’s experience and good practices within the transition phase to IRIS Certification™ rev. 03.

Organisation of the transition
Changes resulting from the IRIS certification revision 03 have been considered as part of the continuous improvement of our Alstom Management System, but also within the way we manage the IRIS certification of our concerned sites, as well as how we manage quality with our suppliers. The new revision of IRIS Certification has impacted our certification policy for suppliers, but not only; it has also changed the management of our IRIS certificates for the 17 Alstom concerned sites around the world.

Since Alstom has a unique ISO 9001 certificate for all our activities worldwide, it started to become difficult to manage all our IRIS certifications according to their different reference dates. Moreover, the Alstom certifications campaign covering around 120 locations must be completed within 4 months each year, including other certifications such as ISO 14001, ISO 37001, OHSAS 18001 and CMMI.

The option 2 of the transition phase to IRIS certification™ revision 03, presented by UNIFE at InnoTrans in September 2016, was an opportunity to change the reference date of our IRIS certificates, so that they would be better aligned together and synchronised with the ISO 9001 certificate of Alstom. However, when considering this option, it was highlighted that some sites were going to lose their IRIS certificate for several weeks. The related risks and opportunities have been considered by the Alstom Executive Committee, and the audits planning with option 2 had been approved. Some customers had questioned our sites when they noticed that some IRIS certificates would be lost during some time, but we explained how we would control such a case. It was essential to plan our audits as early as possible with our certification body to ensure availability of all auditors we need to achieve our certifications, so the audits schedule was finalized 4 months in advance.

Internal application
There were also some challenges implementing changes in our management system. Part of these challenges was to improve the definition of our processes as well as their performance indicators, such as the requirement management data to be provided to the auditor 60 days before the audit. Significant attention was also necessary for the 22 mandatory processes to get them managed as required by ISO/TS 22163 especially with appropriate performance indicators, reviews and owners.

Supply chain management
Regarding our suppliers, these changes are significant especially for two reasons: the new set of requirements (ISO/TS 22163) for management systems, and the new certification rules. The new requirements are appreciated as they take into account the return of experience from the previous IRIS revision 02; they are more focused on product quality and more adapted to small and middle-sized companies. There is also a key change with the new certification rules, with the assessment of our suppliers’ quality performance and their ability to achieve our expectations, resulting ultimately in different certification levels (Bronze, Silver and Gold).

Therefore, Alstom decided to update its IRIS Certification™ policy towards its suppliers accordingly:
- Make this certification mandatory for targeted suppliers which are key contributors to Alstom quality performance;
- Reduce the number of audits performed by Alstom at their IRIS certified sites;
- Consider IRIS certification as a key criterion for selecting suppliers in future business awards;
- Potentially adapt the level of Alstom quality controls during suppliers’ products development stages, depending on their IRIS certification level.

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A first batch of key suppliers received a letter from Alstom shortly after the release of IRIS revision 03, explaining why this new revision is important for Alstom and its suppliers, then requiring them to get this new certification within a target date. We also asked them to confirm their plan to achieve that, and what their difficulties would be, if any, in complying with this requirement.

At this time, the IRIS certification revision 03 is being progressively deployed within our supply chain. Our first contacted suppliers were selected as a result of a process taking into account strategic relevance, level of invoice, product criticality, and quality performance. Other suppliers will be contacted by mid-2018 and this will continue afterwards.

To sum up, the transition to IRIS revision 03 was a good opportunity to improve our IRIS certification policy for suppliers, but also to improve the planning of our IRIS certifications, especially considering the option 2 of the transition phase.
Status of the IRIS Certification™ transition phase

The launch of the IRIS Certification™ rev. 03 system on 1st June 2017 also marked the start of the transition phase for companies to the new system.

Due to the fact that the IRIS Certification™ system is based on the ISO 9001, the deadline for the transition phase is on 14 September 2018, in line with all other topical management systems such as automotive, aerospace, telecom, etc. All IRIS transition audits shall be conducted before this date. This will enable the closure of potential corrective actions later this year by respecting the reference date and within ninety days after the transition audit. As usual, the validity of the IRIS Certificate rev. 03 will start after positive closure of these corrective actions.

Despite the above mentioned rules, the validity of the IRIS rev. 02 is still limited: All IRIS certificates will expire on 14 September 2018, even if a later date is mentioned on the certificate document.

Missing the transition deadline means that the certificate will no longer be valid, and this may affect your supplies to the rail sector: the rail stakeholders expect from now on a recognition of performance and most importantly of product quality.

Figure 1: Evolution of implementation of IRIS rev.03 - April 2018
Three months before the end of the transition phase, the current status of implementation shows that 25% of the IRIS certified companies have successfully transferred to the new IRIS rev. 03 system. For the upcoming months more than 40% of audits are planned by the certification bodies. However, still 35% of these certified companies have no confirmed scheduled audit for the transition (cf. Figure 1).

The Figure 2 shows the status of the implementation by continent and the region where the implementation shall be reinforced and will be strongly pushed by the IRIS board members.

Therefore, now more than ever, we encourage the companies that are still hesitant to accelerate their decisions and use these last month of the transition phase to move to the new IRIS Certification™ rev. 03 system, by selecting one of the 2 available options:

- **Option 1:** Transition process within their current IRIS rev. 02 audit cycle i.e. on the next planned surveillance or re-certification audit date
- **Option 2:** Transition process at any time i.e. outside the normal surveillance and re-certification audit cycle, in which case the audit cycle will be broken.

**How to move on?**
Decision for the transition phase:
- Option 1 or Option 2: Internal preparation
- In parallel, contact your certification body to plan your transition audit
- agree on data availability and readiness review

Figure 2: TOP 10 countries - transition implementation

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