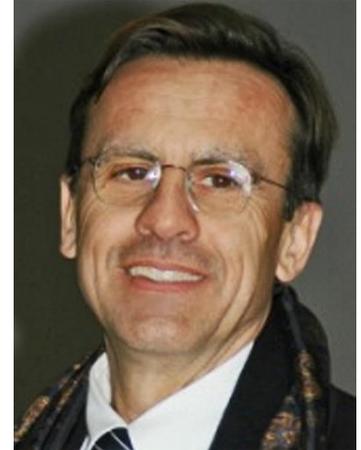


The European Virtual Institute for Integrated Risk Management (EU-VRi) and ISO 31000

Interview conducted for isotc262.org with

Prof. Dr. Aleksandar Jovanović, CEO of EU-VRi, the European Virtual Institute for Integrated Risk Management in liaison with TC 262



Aleksandar Jovanović is professor at Steinbeis University, Berlin and University of Novi Sad. He has a long-year professional experience as project manager of many large international/multi-national projects in the area risk management, resilience and related areas. As a “risk practitioner” he has contributed to the global risk community by a number of actions, such as convener and main author of the European standards CEN-CWA 15740:2008 (“RBI”), prEN16991:2017 (“RBI”) and CEN-CWA 16449:2013 (“Management on New Technologies-Related Risks”). Prof. Jovanović is also the CEO of the European Virtual Institute for Integrated Risk Management (EU-VRi), director of Steinbeis Advanced Risk technologies Group and the EU Project Director and lecturer at ZIRIUS (Research Center for Interdisciplinary Risk and Innovation Studies, University of Stuttgart).

isotc262.org: *Aleksandar you were the liaison representative of The European Virtual Institute for Integrated Risk Management (EU-VRi) at the ISO/TC 262 meeting in October 2016 in Amman. Can you briefly introduce EU-VRi, please?*

Aleksandar: Indeed, in TC262 I have the honor to represent the EU-VRi, the European Institute for Integrated Risk Management, a European organization with more than 50 members, operating as the European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG). The members come from industry (e.g. large industry companies as EDF or NIS), insurance (such as Allianz or SwissRe), international organizations (such as OECD or IRGC), European research (such as BAM or INERIS), universities (such as Stuttgart or Bologna), and, last but not least, from standardization organizations (such as CEN or DIN). Apart from the European members, EU-VRi has also some non-EU ones, such as those from China or Israel. All the EU-VRi members share the same view, that the successful dealing with risks in the modern world is not possible without an integrated approach to risk management, including both the known and the new, emerging risks.

All the members understand well the importance of the work done in the TS262 and are keen to provide qualified contributions. Qualified in the sense that they are aware that the importance of a contribution provided by any stakeholder must be based on:

- a) SPECIFIC RISK COMPETENCE of the contribution provider – obviously, in the area of risk management the EU-VRi can draw on “top professionals in the area of ISO 31000”,
- b) SOCIETAL RELEVANCE of the contribution provider – EU-VRi members present the views of about half a million employees and the services of the EU-VRi members are relevant for more than 100 million people – the service depending also on proper risk management,
- c) PROJECTS i.e. CURRENT WORK of the contribution provider – EU-VRi members chair or are currently directly engaged in significant “risk projects” in Europe and worldwide: from developing new common approaches to identifying new technology risks, over defining common European risk and resilience indicators to the industrial projects involving assessment of risk in the national energy systems or large oil companies.

isotc262.org: *What is the impact of risk management and in particular ISO 31000 as seen by EU-VRi?*

Aleksandar: For years, ISO 31000 activities were very much linked to the message “we should tell people and convince as many of them as possible, that risk management is important and that ISO has a (good!) way for how one can/should do it”. In the meantime, many stakeholders have understood the message and started introducing risk management in their own particular fields: quality management, occupational safety, environmental safety... But, it seems, that many of these stakeholders have overlooked the risk which may arise (and in fact arises!) from the silo-thinking and silo-acting, let alone the “silo-standardization”. That is a particular new challenge for ISO 31000 and, at the same time, its greatest opportunity for achieving real global impact by providing THE common framework shared and accepted by all.

isotc262.org: *Who are the key stakeholders of risk management in the view of EU-VRi?*

Aleksandar: Well, that is a place where our TC262 has quite some “space for improvement”. We can, namely, reach lots of benefits, if we manage to better include some groups of stakeholders currently not necessarily well represented. These would be:

- (a) big industry and end-users
- (b) scientific community, and
- (c) other ISO standardization groups.

One could say that big industry and end-users have generally reduced their involvement in the standardization process in many areas, unfortunately, also those relevant to ISO 31000. We have to do more about it, and that it is certainly one area where the AG1 “Communication” has one of its main challenges and opportunities in the future.

As for the scientific, academic and research communities, the situation is at least complex. Many of the results obtained by the scientists and researchers face a long way and many obstacles in finding their way to the standardization. This has certainly many reasons, but from my personal point of view, the main reason could be the lack of opportunities for these stakeholders to exchange thoughts with the standardization people. The standardization themes are seldom present at scientific conferences (even worse, standardization work is often seen as “not scientific enough” or too mundane), the scientists are seldom regular members of the standardization committees.

As for the stakeholders from the other standardization groups, the situation is also complicated. ISO does not foresee the “obligation of alignment” (among the standards) and the standardization work often happens at so many dispersed places simultaneously. It is, therefore, often practically impossible to achieve alignment during the creation of a standard. Once when standard is “ready”, it can be too late for alignment. Again, also here, AG1 “Communication” could play a great positive role.

In that sense, it would be great if members of TC262, in particular those in AG1 could be involved in the next World Congress on Risk in Cape Town, South Africa in March 2019 organized by SRA, the Society of Risk Analysis and hosted by EU-VRi together with Steinbeis University.

isotc262.org: *What are the biggest obstacles for integrating risk management in all organizational activities for managers in the judgment of EU-VRi?*

Aleksandar: The obstacles may, of course, strongly vary from organization to organization. But from our own experience, they range between the two extremes.

The first extreme can be found in the “risk immature” organizations. In these organizations, the awareness about the needs and benefits of good risk management is often very low and, thus, kills the idea of introducing risk management as such. If, due to whatever reason, these organizations, at the end, do introduce risk management it is often done in a very declarative and haphazard way. The final result is often “double damaging”, discrediting the basic idea of risk management, on one side, and, on the other side, preventing the “real” introduction at a later stage (no one would dare re-introducing the idea already labeled as “failed”).

The second extreme can be found in the organization which already have a lot of experience with risk management, e.g. in assessing safety of technical or financial

systems. In these organizations the resistance to the ISO 31000 introduction is often based on the “not-invented-here-syndrome”. People, tend to be reluctant to reconsider and change their daily routines.

For both obstacles, linking ISO 31000 with the practical applications and the stakeholders involved could help. For instance, one should show to the specialists assessing risk of an explosion in a chemical plant or financial failure of a research project, that that what they already do is just a practical implementation of ISO 31000 principles and that this practical implementation will always profit from aligning with these principles.

isotc262.org: *ISO 31000 quickly became one of the bestselling and most well recognized standards in ISO. What do you think about the future of the standard and how will it change to adapt to new challenges?*

Aleksandar: The fact that people are so interested in ISO 31000 is, of course, great news, but we should all carefully plan for the future: just improving the document by, e.g. refining the current text, may show to be insufficient. We must consider introducing new paradigms and building “bridges” to other stakeholders (e.g. research, end-users), to other relevant concepts (e.g. resilience), to practical applications to new scientific achievements (e.g. in the area of cognitive sciences) We must talk, but also listen, respect and consider other relevant opinions and achievements coming from important stakeholders such as SRA. ISO 31000 will never be successful if imposed, only if embraced, proven useful and accepted.

isotc262.org: *What message do you want to give to the risk management community?*

Aleksandar: From the time of its foundation in 2006-7 (the time of Obama’s campaign!), the EU-VRi slogan has been “Risk, we care”. In the meantime, this message has become global and omnipresent – no one can afford the luxury of “not caring about risks”. However, it is not enough that each of us “cares about his/her own risk, the best he/she can”. We have to care about the risks in an aligned and integrated way. That could be the “critical mission” of ISO 31000 in the future – to ensure that we all have a common and commonly accepted way of dealing with and managing risks.

isotc262.org: *What advice can you give to interested parties in the EU-VRi community who want to offer their input to the work of ISO/TC 262 and who should they address?*

Aleksandar: The EU-VRi members should all engage actively in “building bridges towards standardization and ISO 262”, as they have already done on several occasions and are doing so currently – e.g. by developing the new EU standards for risk-based inspection, for emerging risks of new technologies, for resilience, for nanotechnologies etc. I am sure that these bridges will be of a mutual benefit for all: single risk topics treated

better in the particular projects of the EU-VRi members and ISO 31000 itself will get additional examples of its good and successful application.

isotc262.org: **Thank you very much!**

Aleksandar: Thank you, I hope to continue this dialogue at latest at the World Congress on Risk in 2019!