



## Risk Management and ISO 31000 in Poland

Interview conducted for isotc262.org  
with

### Slawomir Pijanowski, member of Poland's mirror committee to ISO/TC 262

Slawomir Pijanowski is President of the POLRISK Risk Management Association, a member of FERMA and an Information Governance Risk Compliance Senior Consultant at Atos Global Delivery Center Poland combining digital transformation with risk management. Prior to this, he worked as Risk Manager and Solvency II Program Manager at Postal Mutual Insurance Company, Risk analyst and Program Director at Polish Telecom and Orange France Telecom, Deutsche Bank Poland and also as an independent expert. He has a Ph.D. and a Master of Science in Economics, Capital Investment and Financial Strategies of Companies from Poznan University of Economics. Slawomir Pijanowski is member of Management Systems Technical Committee.

**isotc262.org:** *Slawomir you are a member of Poland's mirror committee to TC 262. Can you briefly introduce PKN, the Polish Committee for Standardization, your national standardization organization in Poland, please?*

**Slawomir:** The Polish Committee for Standardization (PKN) is a State Organizational Unit financed by the State budget recognized as a National Standards Body, operating pursuant to the Act on Standardization. It specifies basic goals and principles and the organization and financing of standards work.

**isotc262.org:** *Did you adopt ISO 31000 as a national standard in Poland and what were the reasons for this decision?*

**Slawomir:** Yes, we adopted and published ISO 31000 in 2012 after two years of intensive work with PKN Polish members of TC No 6 for Management Systems. The main reason for going with adoption was that there were no national organization-wide (holistic) risk management standards before 2009 (only domain ones like ISO 27005, etc.) and the urgent necessity to have the standard translated into Polish as there was and still is a language communication barrier. We were one of the first countries to adopt ISO 31000 starting work on adoption early in 2010.



isotc262.org: *What is risk management based on in Poland (e.g.: are there any laws, regulations, national standards or other rules?) and what is the impact of risk management in Poland?*

**Slawomir:** Risk management is driven from a regulatory point of view: EU directives implemented into Polish law: insurance (Solvency II, EIOPA System of Governance), banking (Capital Requirements Directive IV / Capital Requirement Regulation, Basel III), investment funds (Markets in Financial Instruments Directive MiFID II), railway (Regulation 402/2013 on the CSM for risk assessment and repealing Regulation 352/2009), industry (Seveso III Directive for factories of increased or high risk related to industrial failures), and corporate governance (Best Practice for Warsaw Stock Exchange Listed Companies 2016 including governance, internal audit and risk management implementations recommendations).

isotc262.org: *Who are the key stakeholders of risk management in Poland?*

**Slawomir:** Supervisory boards, the management of big companies, regulatory bodies, insurers, brokers, the stock exchange, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Development, we as POLRISK and domain risk related associations, and also at an international level: PRMIA, IIA, ISSA International, ISACA, ACCA, and of course the management consulting industry.

isotc262.org: *What are the biggest obstacles for integrating risk management in all organizational activities – an essential principle of ISO 31000 – for managers in Poland?*

**Slawomir:** There is a term “Slavic soul” – decoded as spontaneity, “last minute” actions, openness to dare, take a challenge, be courageous which is not always supported by strategic thinking, planning and then execution. This “soul” is part of our national or regional character, but in open societies in my opinion it is changing and within one or two generations we as Polish people will on average be more planning oriented. As this is a very broad topic, I would indicate that more detailed insight into respective challenges and barriers of risk management in Poland have been described by myself together with prof. Zbigniew Krysiak (Warsaw School of Economics) in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of “Implementing Enterprise Risk Management”: Case Studies and Best Practices (editors: Fraser, Simkins and Narvaez).

isotc262.org: *How does your mirror committee involve itself in standard development at present and how do you see this developing in the future?*

**Slawomir:** We do not have a specific risk management mirror committee but it is under the broader topics of PKN Technical Committee No 6 for management systems which in case of Poland is very open to input from new local stakeholders and operates efficiently

in terms of the risk management agenda. Key strategic directions or actions are described in the activity plan of PKN TC No 6 committee. The committee is aware that some good expert voices are not heard as they have no budget for financing their continuous participation in each international committee, so consideration should be given to enabling remote participation via videoconference.

**isotc262.org:** *What are the key developments your mirror committee hopes to see in ISO 31000 and in risk management standard development in general at an international level over the next years?*

**Slawomir:** I have a concern about the current move to simplify and shorten the standard, and suggest that we are careful and re-examine the goals of the revision. Acknowledging how challenging it is to compromise on some provisions in the standard my other key concerns are:

- The lack of a formal definition of “uncertainty” and the relationship with the risk definition notes. There are already some good definitions of uncertainty in other ISO guidance that are broader than the deficiency of information. There would also be benefits to considering uncertainty as neutral and having potential positive or negative consequences instead of considering this in the definition of risk. This could resolve issues for the area of Health and Safety referencing ISO 31000, and we could start to think about “challenge” as a term instead of the incorrect term “positive risks”.
- The extension of risk terminology to management as a whole. Management is a broader term than risk management – risk management is not management as some claim it to be. It is and still will be subset of management.
- we should as ISO TC 262 analyze the pro and cons of making ISO 31000 a certifiable management system standard as we can observe not only in Poland various “creative” inclinations by some companies selling ISO 31000 “certifications” or maturity assessments to customers unaware what “certification, conformance” service they are really buying. I believe that ISO should react more actively to this unethical behavior. On the other hand, organizations are seeking alternatives to financial rating agency assessments, with all their strengths and weaknesses revealed after the last crisis. We need to be careful and use risk analysis in making our decision.

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

**Slawomir:** In Poland, I have met or observed two types of attitudes towards ISO 31000:



- A negative one which concentrates on the standard being too general, without sufficient specific tooling (often forgetting that there is ISO 31010) or clear requirements on what to do, if you are just a manager or a practitioner. I also still meet people who do not fully understand all of the key aspects of the standard due to wording or language complexity or just not knowing what “the author had in mind”.
- A positive one where professionals with a sound approach and the right expectations regard the standard as a guideline or inspirational guideline for elaborating their own company risk management framework with key principles in mind.

You need the right knowledge to get the most out of ISO 31000 and ISO 31010 and this has limitations leading to inconsistent implementation in various companies due to ambiguity of risk or uncertainty, or not understanding the principles or limits of adjustment possible that are still within the ISO 31000 spirit.

In my opinion, in Poland if ISO 31000 is not a certifiable standard its role will be weak in comparison with quality, information security or environmental management systems standards.

**isotc262.org:** *What advice can you give to interested parties in Poland who want to offer their input to the work of ISO/TC 262 and PKN Technical Committee No 6 for Management Systems and who should they address?*

**Slawomir:** Become member of POLRISK Risk Management Association (we already collated remarks for ISO 31000 revision among our members) or take active part in PKN TC No 6 Committee. All contact details, scope of work are available after clicking on here: [www.polrisk.pl](http://www.polrisk.pl) or [Technical Committee No 6 on PKN website](#).

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

**Slawomir:** Thank you.