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## **National Organization for Standardization (AFNOR)**

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The French national standards organization in France is the French Association for Standardization (AFNOR). In addition to standardization itself, AFNOR's activities include certification, metrology, management and quality control.

The French Association for Standardization (AFNOR) was founded in 1926 as a private non-profit organization - the country's leading standardization organization.

The certification is organized along sectoral lines and constantly interacts with the standardization system both in terms of compliance with national standards and the development of new requirements and norms.

Voluntary certification to French national standards is carried out by AFNOR, usually using the most stringent certification scheme. Certified products are labelled with the French National Standards mark - NF. Up to 75% of production is subject to voluntary certification. In contrast to the affirmation of conformity with the EU Directives, in this case it is required to prove that the product meets all the requirements of the national standard, including safety [1].

The safety control of products on sale is carried out through regular quality control checks of selected samples, labelled with the SE and NF labels, against the requirements of the EU Directive or the French national standard, respectively [1].



Fig.1 – France's quality label [2]

The right to use the NF mark may be granted by the manufacturer on the basis of a contract and a license where a significant proportion of the manufacturers of the product in question have an interest in it. By labelling a product with the NF mark, the licensee assumes obligations not only towards AFNOR, but also towards the consumer.

Products of foreign origin may also be labelled with this mark if they meet the established requirements for similar French products. Certification for the NF mark is voluntary. The exception is medical products (materials, medicines, equipment), where testing, including clinical, is mandatory. Such products are labelled with the NF-MEDICAL mark [1].

Despite the voluntary nature, firms - manufacturers of any kind of products strive to gain the right to be labelled with the NF mark, as this ensures consumer confidence in the quality of the goods.

Due to the increasing globalization of environmental problems AFNOR considers it necessary to intensify activities at the international level French experts are leading the working group "Waste", in ISO - participate in the work of the committee "Protection and rational use of the environment". In these areas, programmes are being implemented to meet both national and European needs: Waste, Air Quality and Soil Quality. Under these programmes, regulations are drawn up for the various stages of the product life cycle. On the basis of the regulations developed, experts prepare technical specifications for those products that have not yet passed the environmental control for the right to be labelled with the NF Environment label [3].

In the nearest future, AFNOR plans to accelerate the standardization of information technology in the following areas: media, civil engineering and office documentation.

To sum up, AFNOR is a large organization which is developing rapidly and making a major contribution to standardization and certification in France and beyond.

The main strategic objectives of AFNOR concern various areas. For example, in quality, the revision of international standards ISO 9000 series in order to adapt them to small and medium-sized businesses and the service sector.

In this area, the organization plans meetings with European, North American and Japanese partners.

The company may manage the national conformity mark "NF", i.e. AFNOR determines the credentials of testing centers and laboratories, is responsible for their accreditation, for granting and withdrawing the NF mark, and coordinates cooperation of national certification bodies with international organizations.

From the above, it is possible to conclude that AFNOR is a company that pays a great deal of attention to development in its field of activity.

#### References:

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