

EXPERT COMMENTARY

The Application of Standards to Achieve Sustainable Development in Norway

Like many, I dream of a future world with levels of sustainability that exceed those of today and perhaps expand beyond what is currently imaginable. To attain this dream requires the coordinated effort of many and a willingness to make difficult decisions today that will positively impact tomorrow. International standards reflect the coordinated work of people, organizations, and societies in facing the challenges of today in making the tomorrow we envision. For Standard Norway, working towards this sustainable future is a central premise of our mission statement and our long-term strategic plan.

‘Standards are the basis of innovation. This is why we supply products and services that disseminate knowledge, ensure confidence and profitability and help to create innovative and sustainable solutions.’

The impact of activities supporting a sustainable future can be both high with up-scale standardization work, as well as low with smaller-scale and more personal dissemination of standardization work. The use of ISO 50001 by Allnex Norway, a coating resin company, to manage energy use and reduce energy cost and CO2 emissions is an example of high impact standardization. At the other end of the scale, are the everyday workings of standardization on sustainability through activities such as events and seminars based on ISO 20121, where even regular small-scale events like our own breakfast seminars ‘Standard Morning’ make a positive impact.

The Interconnected Relationship Between Standards and Sustainability

Standards and standardization are the most effective tools for implementing new environmental requirements and regulations and for providing recommendations and guidelines to help businesses and societies to reach SDGs. They provide a common reference for producers, customers, governments, and society in general. A joint Nordic survey conducted in 2018 revealed that 50 % of companies in the Nordic countries stated that standards help them reduce their environmental impact, and 87 % maintain that standards assist them in complying with legal regulations.

Standards are developed and adapted to many levels. Global challenges, for example, need to be solved using international standards, whereas challenges specific to geographical areas may need to be solved using national or regional standards.

An example of two new national standards for increased sustainability in Norway are NS 3840 Green Roofs facilitating the use of vegetation as environmentally friendly insulation and the NS 3845 Blue-Green Factor providing environmentally friendly handling of surface water and vegetation during construction. The Blue-Green Factor standard also gives innovative attention to biodiversity, if still on a limited level. Beyond the promise of national standards, we firmly believe in international standards as an effective mechanism in reaching strategic SDGs. Thus, we strongly support initiatives to develop standards at the European and international level as well.

EXPERT COMMENTARY DEVELOPED BY:

Jacob Mehus, Managing Director

Standards Norway

