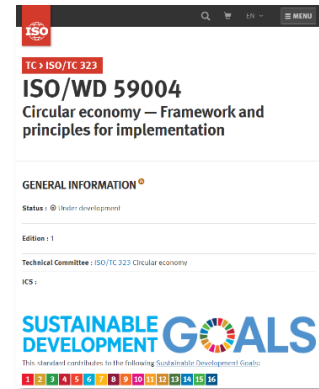


The circular economy requires standardized working methods



Mattias Lindahl, program manager for Mistra REES, has many strings on his lyre. He is chairman of the Swedish committee SIS / TK 616 Circular Economy, which reflects ISO / TC323 Circular Economy. He is active in ISO / WD 59004 – Circular economy – Framework and principles for implementation and leads together with Sergio de Freitas Monforte from Brazil the “drafting team”, which in the autumn of 2020 is working on a first draft of the standard “scope, terms, definitions, and principles”, and not least the definition of the circular economy.

ISO’s work with the circular economy (CE) is very intensive and involves people from all corners of the globe. It is important to get a good consensus, that is, one where everyone can stand behind what is written. Consensus is core in standardization work, Mattias points out. One problem is that today, there are so many perceptions about what the CE is and is not, and the same applies to its principles, e.g. there are hundreds of different definitions of the CE in various reports, research articles and national standards.

Standardization work is an important component if we are to succeed in a coherent and functional transition to a CE, says Mattias. As the CE is becoming more and more established as a concept of values, it is important that we all learn from each other and build a common understanding of how it should be defined, implemented and measured. The transition to a CE will affect all different industries, and some type of adaptation will be required from the actors who want to remain relevant in times of rapid change. Having a standard that everyone works from makes it easier to create more industry-specific solutions.

If you look at the major challenges with the standardization work, it is, in addition to creating a consensus, to develop a standard that does not hamper innovation. Instead, it seeks to create standards that drive innovation and enable more circular and resource-efficient solutions. In addition, it is important that the creation of standards is inclusive – as everyone will be affected by the standards developed in the transition to a CE. In the standardization work, there is a risk that not everyone feels that they have the opportunity to participate due to lack of resources, such as small and medium-sized companies or companies and organizations from developing countries. The risk is that only the large companies participate and that standards are created that primarily suit them. Experience shows, however, that it is easier to get something to work that has been adapted for the small and then enlarged than vice versa.

For Sweden and Swedish companies, work is now underway on four relevant CE standards within ISO. According to Mattias, it is the one about “Framework, principles, terminology, and management system standard” and the one about “Measuring Circularity” that are most central to Sweden at present. In order to be able to move forward, it is important to be able to measure so that you see that you are on the right path.

Mistra REES has and can contribute important knowledge about how the standards should be designed. It is important that they are based on science. The design of “Environmentally conscious design” (IEC 62430: 2019) and “Guidance for integrating ecodesign” (ISO 14006: 2020) are two concrete examples where knowledge from Mistra REES is woven in.

Read more about the work here <https://www.sis.se/standardutveckling/tksidor/tk600699/tk616/> and here <https://www.iso.org/committee/7203984.html>