

STANDARDS AND CONSULTING SYSTEMS USED BY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

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Keywords: organization, ecology, environment, sustainable development, standardization systems.

Abstract: Even though in this moment an exact response to the environment crisis can not be given, the economy tends to assume a fundamental role in its administration, by: rational utilization of the resources, the forethought of some costs and damages to the environment, establishing and respecting the modalities of protecting the environment.

Without environmental protection, no sustainable development can be carried out. Sustainable development includes environmental protection, while environmental protection conditions sustainable development in its turn. The strategy of environmental protection can thus be found in its essential coordinates in the Strategy for sustainable development. Sustainable development is meeting today's needs of development without compromising future generations ability to develop.

Ecological management strategy is an important tool for sustainability-promoting organizations in order to nature conservation and sustainable management. For that reason ecological management should be preferably promoted not only in the European countries but all over the world .

There are a number of environmental standards available, around which we can model our Environmental Management System, or EMS. On the international scene we have the ISO14000 family, and at the European level we have EMAS, or the Eco- Management and Audit Scheme.

1. The evolution of ecological sustainability-promoting organizations

Human existence is undoubtedly connected to environment. That is the reason why the quality of each environment component influences, directly or indirectly the human evolution and being influenced by his activities. The appearance and development of man has constituted the event that has expendably influenced the environment; if the animals and plants knew a long evolution process and a long accommodation to the environmental conditions, the human imposed his will, used the environment along with his spectacular evolution.

The environment appears like a multidimensional reality, which includes not only the natural surrounding but also human's activity and creations, having a double role: a component of the environment and also a consumer, a beneficiary. The whole group of human-environment inter-conditioning relations influences on the one hand the ecological equilibrium and on the other hand human's life and work conditions as well as the perspectives of the society development. The labor represents a direct process between human and nature, in which human acts in the same time constructive and destructive on the ecosystem, in his attempt to procure the necessary for living. This is the main contradiction between human and environment.

Everyone is responsible for acting in a way which will make our future sustainable. This includes local, State and federal governments, business, industry, community groups and individuals. Environmental protection became a general concern. On the

one hand, it is an issue related to the development of the society, and on the other hand, it is a matter of recovering, reserving and protecting the environment. In order to solve this problem as efficiently as possible, some strategies in the field have been elaborated, as well as action plans on local, regional, national, European and international levels. A strategy regarding environmental protection must define general guidelines, principles, directions, objectives and criteria to identify actions that may lead to a social, economic and sustainable development envisaging environmentally related issues.

Firms / organisations / communities that are concerned to achieve sustainability need to have a way of describing themselves as such. But to call themselves a 'sustainable organisation', or firm or community or whatever, is vainglorious while the wider society is so far from sustainability. So it is more accurate and empowering to refer to the firm / organisation / community as 'sustainability-promoting'.

Once sustainability-promoting businesses emerge they need to band together with other sustainability-promoting organisations such as community groups and government environment agencies to form a powerful force for sustainability leadership and advocacy. To solve these problems will require nothing less than a radical transformation to achieve an ecologically sustainable economy.

Sustainable development is meeting today's needs of development without compromising future generations ability to develop. The linkage between environment and development was globally recognized in 1980, when the International Union for the Conservation of Nature published the World Conservation Strategy and used the term "sustainable development." The concept came into general usage following publication of the 1987 report of the Brundtland Commission — formally, the World Commission on Environment and Development Set up by the United Nations General Assembly, the Brundtland Commission coined what was to become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development as development that "meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Environmental sustainability is defined as the ability of the environment to continue to function properly indefinitely. This involves meeting the present needs of humans without endangering the welfare of future generations. The goal of environmental sustainability is to minimize environmental degradation, and to halt and reverse the processes they lead to. The action plan must comprise the objectives and tasks embodied and quantified in time, space and costs. Natural giving economic value to environmental systems may actually help preserve those systems in the long run. Sustainable development implies a broad view of human welfare, a long term perspective about the consequences of today's activities, and the full involvement of civil society to reach viable solutions. This approach brings together two disciplines that historically are not allied: economics, which traditionally assigns set values, and ecology, which characterizes how nature works and tries to demonstrate that nature's support is compulsory for sustainable development. Reforming unsustainable subsidies requires political commitment, transparency, consistency, and perhaps good governance practices. Sustainable Development is often an over-used word, but goes to the heart of tackling a number of inter-related global issues such as poverty, inequality, hunger and environmental degradation. In theory, development that is sustainable and not damaging to the planet is very possible. Of course though, in reality there are a lot of politics and challenges involved.

The challenge, comes when people make the argument that you can't place a value on nature. Because both ecological problems and the economy have very strong global

elements, the institution building for a managed market and the political pressure to create it will need to have a global dimension. This means that ecological sustainability will not be achievable unless at least some multinational corporations become genuinely sustainability-promoting. The pressures that the economic system are placing on the environment are massive, and they are rapidly increasing. Nowadays the environment has become an expression of the internal contradictions of our civilizations and its conquests.

Protection and enhancement of the environment is a high priority for all the organizations and residents of this planet. All this is achievable only through an efficient partnership between government authorities, local public administrations, professional labor organizations, trade-unions, NGOs and all citizens. In the same time, all government institutions, the representatives of the business sector and of civil society, as well as the financial institutions have to cooperate with the relevant agencies and organizations, at regional and international level for the benefit of future generations.

That's why it's not good enough to just work towards ecological sustainability for society as if it is not actually something we expect to happen. We have to work out how ecological sustainability can be achieved, in a desirable time frame, and how it can be maintained as our society continues to evolve.

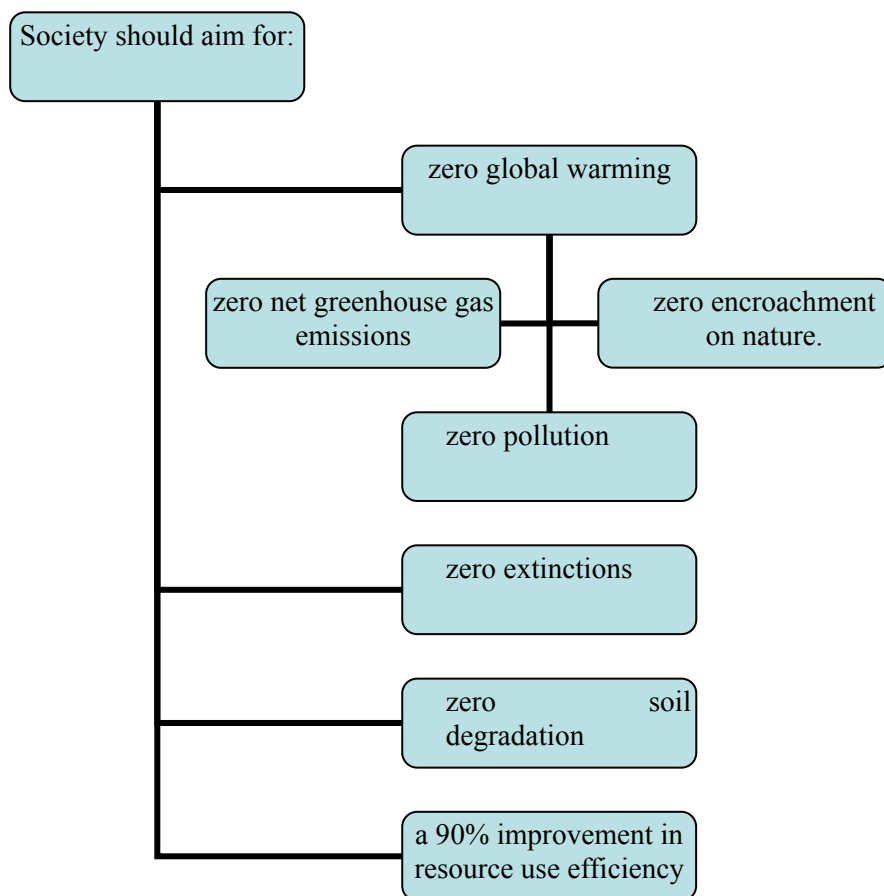


Fig. 1: Setting the direction, strategies and targets for a sustainable society

Using an efficient management system which should work properly in both economical and ecological terms, could help any organisation to decrease the negative impact on the nature. Ecological management strategies are an important tool for sustainability-promoting organisations in order to nature conservation and sustainable management. For that reason ecological management should be preferably promoted not only in the European countries but all over the world.

By adopting the permanent development strategy, the environment is permanently connected to the global tendencies from this domain. The priority the environmental policy enjoys at present is not due to the span of the allocated funds but to the fact that it has become the horizontal policy of the E.U., the aspects regarding the environment being considered compulsive for all the other community policies.

Environmental management means different things to different people. Generally the focus is on environmental impacts and ways they can be minimized. The scope of the activities, resources or area that we aim to improve environmentally varies considerably. On a global scale, environmental management strategies are being developed, agreed to, haggled over and implemented to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and slow the warming of Earth's atmosphere, all by the sustainable development bases.

The key to unleashing the power of government is the sustainability-promoting firm. If such firms proliferated and they joined with other elements in society they might create a coalition strong enough to counter the businesses that are currently blocking adequate environmental responses.

2. Organisations's arguments in order to become sustainability – supporting

Environmental management is not, as the phrase could suggest, the management of the environment as such but rather the management of man's interaction with and impact upon the environment.

The two core requirements for ecological sustainability are that:

- the diversity of life and the basis of its productivity must be maintained
- society must organize itself so that this is easy to achieve

So, if, society is to achieve sustainability (ecological, social and economic) a strategically significant number of firms will have to become active partners in seeking the institutional reform to make effective ecological management possible, then there will need to be a proliferation of sustainability-promoting firms

The probability that firms will become sustainability-promoting will be substantially improved if:

- scientific information on the seriousness, scale and urgency of key environmental issues spreads
- will create robust win-win economic strategies for an ecologically sustainable society at macro, industry sector/infrastructure and micro levels
- management tools for the sustainability-promoting organisation are created and spread
- community-based lifestyle program to help people develop and live lifestyles that are sustainability promoting are initiated
- appropriate relationships with institutions of government are established

This kind of self-limiting behaviour is at present rare and is unfortunately used by those organizations mostly in propagandistic purposes and not for actually using it, but is not impossible nor necessarily disadvantageous to those firms.

Ecological sustainability must not be undermined by systematic: increases in concentrations in nature of substances that come from the earth's crust or are produced by society, increases in the manipulation or harvesting of nature, failure to restore the ecological basis for biodiversity and ecological productivity. We have to work out how ecological sustainability can be achieved, in a desirable time frame, and how it can be maintained as our society continues to evolve.

3. Environmental management systems

Environmental management systems have become a requirement for businesses to address the environment in order to maintain customers, and exist in a critical global economy. Environmental management systems can assist an organization to meet its increasingly heavy burden of responsibility for the future condition of our world environment. In many cases, the introduction of an environmental management system can also aid cost savings, and reduction of environmental liability.

What is an Environmental Management System (EMS)? The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines environmental management systems as "that part of the overall practices, procedures, processes and resources for developing, implementing, achieving, reviewing and maintaining the environmental policy." Environmental Management System focuses on environmental management practices rather than the activities themselves. It provides the structure by which certain activities can be carried out; it ensures operator training and that proper procedures are in place but doesn't specify methods or frequency of sampling.

The EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) is a management tool for companies and other organizations to evaluate, report and improve their environmental performance. The scheme has been available for participation by companies since 1995 (Council Regulation of 29 June 1993) and was originally restricted to companies in industrial sectors. Three years after the EMAS first public site, appears international environment management systems and standards ISO 14001. The Eco-Management and Audit Scheme is a voluntary instrument which acknowledges organisations that improve their environmental performance on a continuous basis. EMAS registered organisations are legally compliant, run an environment management system and report on their environmental performance through the publication of an independently verified environmental statement. Environmental management has become a core business issue for many organisations. Minimising the amount of waste that is produced, reducing energy consumption and making more efficient use of resources can all lead to financial cost savings, in addition to helping to protect and enhance the environment. EMAS is strongly backed by Government or its institutions and the environmental regulators - organisations who participate are recognised as making strong commitments to the environment and to improving their economic competitiveness.

The international family standards ISO 14000 address various aspects of environmental management. It applies to those environmental aspects which the organization has control and over which it can be expected to have an influence.

Fulfilling these requirements demands objective evidence which can be audited to demonstrate that the environmental management system is operating effectively in conformity to the standard. So, as I said before ISO 14001 was first published in 1996

and specifies the actual requirements for an environmental management system. ISO 14001 is essentially a system designed to help communities and other types of organizations meet their environmental obligations and reduce the impact of their operations on the environment, it is relevant to all types of organizations. ISO 14001 is a tool that can be used to meet internal objectives:

- provide assurance to management that it is in control of the organizational processes and activities having an impact on the environment
- assure employees that they are working for an environmentally responsible organization.

ISO 14001 can also be used to meet external objectives:

- provide assurance on environmental issues to external stakeholders – such as customers, the community and regulatory agencies
- comply with environmental regulations
- support the organization's claims and communication about its own environmental policies, plans and actions
- provides a framework for demonstrating conformity via suppliers' declarations of conformity, assessment of conformity by an external stakeholder - such as a business client - and for certification of conformity by an independent certification body.

Of all these, ISO 14001 is not only the most well known, but is the only ISO 14000 standard against which it is currently possible to be certified by an external certification authority. ISO 14001 is often seen as the corner stone standard of the ISO 14000 series.

ISO 14004 provides guidance on the development and implementation of environmental management systems and principles and their co-ordination with other management systems.

The guidelines in this document are intended applicable to any organization that is interested in developing, implementing and/or improving an environmental management system, regardless of size. They are intended for use as a voluntary, internal management tool and not certification or registration.

Table 1

ISO 14000 provides a framework for the development of both the system and the supporting audit program

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| ISO 14001 | Environmental management system model for external applications (qualifications) |
| ISO 14004 | Environmental management system model for internal applications |
| ISO 14010 ISO 14011 ISO 14012 | Environmental management system's correspondences |
| ISO 14014 | Preliminary environmental analysis |
| ISO 14015 | The placement evaluation from the environmental point of view |
| ISO 14031 ISO 14032 | The environmental's performances |
| ISO 14050 | Definitions and other terms about environmental management |

Source: Romanian Standardization Association (ASRO)

Another sustainability organization is The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) is a, global association of some 200 companies dealing exclusively with business and sustainable development. This association was organized the First International Corporate Social Responsibility Conference (CSR/06) in Romania that took place in Bucharest, november 2006.

The Council provides a platform for companies to explore sustainable development, share knowledge, experiences and best practices, and to advocate business positions on these issues in a variety of forums, working with governments, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations.

The Council's objectives are to: be a leading business advocate on sustainable development; participate in policy development to create the right framework conditions for business to make an effective contribution to sustainable human progress; develop and promote the business case for sustainable development; demonstrate the business contribution to sustainable development solutions and share leading edge practices among members;

WBCSD President Björn Stigson Stresses Need to Engage India in Designing an International Climate Change Framework Delhi, 14 February 2008 - "There can be no sustainable world without a sustainable India and a sustainable China". President said, speaking at the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit. While acknowledging the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities", he said it is crucial to involve the leading emerging economies - otherwise "we will all suffer the consequences."

In order to achieve this, the Council focuses on four key areas: development, ecosystems, the corporations role, energy and climate changes.

Those problems will find their solution once with the implementation at a large scale of the strategies and economic and environment policies, of the afferent legislation by informing, educating and instructing the population, but also by according fiscal stimulants and by sensitizing all the involved categories.

The final conclusion is that not only the environment must be adapted to the human needs, but also man must adapt his lifestyle to the particularities of the environment.

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