

# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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**Abstract:**

*The paper deals with aspects regarding the problems of humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and offers some examples of alternative ways to protect the environment. This study refers to economic performance, environmental protection and social responsibility.*

**Key words:** *environment, resources, raw material*

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The best known definition of long life development is probably the one given by the World Committee on the Environment and Development in “ Our common future” report, also known as Brundtland Report, namely:” the long life development is the development that pursuits the accomplishment of present needs, without compromising the possibility of the next generations to satisfy their own needs”. The concept states the goal to be reached more, allowing different interpretations and new approaches. At the same time, the Report admitted that economic development can’t be stopped, but the strategies must be changed so that they go with the ecological limits offered by the environment and the planet’s resources.

In 1992 in Rio de Janeiro took place the “Earth Summit”, where representatives of about 170 countries attended. As a result of this meeting more conventions referring to weather changes (the diminution of carbon dioxide and methane emissions), the biological diversity (species preservation) and the stop of massive clearing were adopted.

The long life development is concerned with important aspects, namely:

- the economic performance
- the protection of the environment
- social responsibility

Economic performance. The companies which had long term strategies have always gained more than the firms led by classic management, traditional resources aligned.

If we take into account the resources, it is obvious that long-dated the alternative created by non-conventional energy sources is more profitable. Fossil fuels require permanent acquisition costs; instead for instance, aeolian or solar energy is natural and free. Its “acquisition” does not cost, but it is invested in electric energy conversion equipment.

The costs are higher in the beginning, but in time there aren’t necessary any other investments, except for the maintaining of the existing equipments. Some firms in Romania have started using biodiesel as fuel for cars, a fuel obtained from breeding material. The firms which are using this type of fuel, not only are put to advantage by the low price of this one, but also by certain laws which give some facilities to the ones who have significant economic influence investments.

Referring to breeding material, one can see some advantage due to the reuse of certain recyclable materials, such as: paper, glass or plastic. On the long term, the investment in recycling facilities is more profitable than in the production one.

The protection of the environment. Long life programs are mainly focused on the protection of the environment and the low level of resources. Increasing care was given to the inexhaustible alternative energies, especially to the solar and wind ones.

The adhesion to the European Union has led to environment agreements which have to be applied by the Romanian companies, too. The factories built by the multinational companies in Romania are also according to the European environment standards. Many companies have built sewage treatment plants, which can be reused.

The massive clearings have increased lately, diminishing the soil's strength and increasing instead the risk of landslides and also the disturbance of the ecosystem's balance and the increase of the greenhouse effect.

The problems related to the environment are obvious and haven't appeared in the last years, but they date from a hundred years ago when massive industrialization began. Only in the 70s, during the first conferences dedicated to the environment were the first warning signals pulled. Nature is generous, but also fragile, with a very precarious balance.

Selective gathering of waste. The main idea within the selective gathering of waste is that each individual can contribute to the long life development. We can actually say that we have a long life way of thinking when we throw plastic or paper waste in the places specially prepared for this.

Recovering garbage will probably become a reflex among Romanian people too, but it's a process which needs time. However, let's not forget the fact that long life development is a pretty new concept.

As for the industry, things have moved much faster and better. Thus, many factories use waste as fuel, and in some parts they are trying to apply home heating systems functional on the combustion of garbage. Companies are the first that realized the economic, but also ecological importance of recovering and reusing waste.

Co-processing waste in cement factories. Cement industry is among the most polluting branch of global economy, the cement factories producing 5% of the total of carbon dioxide emissions. But the issue of care for the environment has been raised. The firms have started to invest in projects which aim at the protection of the environment, alternative fuels and breeding material. The waste that can be burnt in cement furnaces is very different: oils, paints, wood, paper, plastic and used tires.

Social responsibility comes as a demand, determined by the contribution of traditional market to the environment's deterioration, since its specific activities oriented towards consumption enlargement are increasing pollution and the consumption of resources.

Long life development also implies the official institutions, the companies and the nongovernmental organizations, each individual in the end. Thus, social responsibility is up to each "actor" of the modern society. We all interact with the environment, consume resources and we are part of some organizations.

The official institutions are the ones which, by means of clear regulations and international conventions, can impose practical long life development standards. There are also laws dedicated to the protection of the environment, the pollution degree and waste collecting. Other governmental institutions or independent authorities analyze the level of resource consumption, as to assure their continuity during time.

The nongovernmental organizations are maybe the most active "actors" of long life development and the symbol of social responsibility. At an international level, the Greenpeace organization is well known for their actions of protest against pollution and environment destruction. At a local level, in Romania there are organizations, such as "Save Vama Veche", NGO-s which fight for the conservation of the Danube Delta and for the ceasing of building Bastroe Waterway, which would break the ecological

balance in the area. At a national level, long life development programs on specific goals are elaborated in many counties.

Long life development wouldn't be possible without each one's contribution. Here we're talking about each of us' social responsibility. The disposal of waste in specialized centers, the consumption of ecological products, saving the energy, all these have long term effects. In other words, they are parts of long life. Unfortunately, we have to take into account the present reality: ecological consumption cannot be achieved unless the consumer can afford it; in other words, in an acceptable social climate. That is the way in which the large number of old cars with high pollution degree that can be seen on the Romanian roadways, the small number of ecological tips or the mountains of waste in the suburb of towns and villages can be explained. However, the development of ecological products or the care given to natural food is the proof of the fact that we are doing the right thing.

The social responsibility of companies. Both the environment's exactness, in general, and the pressures from the ecological consumers and the ones determined by the authorities' ecological concern will guide marketing progressively towards ecological philosophy and ecological solutions.

The social corporate responsibility is the sum of the actions included in a long term strategy: donations, sponsoring, volunteering, survey, benefits. The social responsibilities of companies vary depending on their structure. A tobacco producer can support a research program in the prevention of lung cancer, a builder in the development of ecological materials and a car company in ways of increasing road safety. The World Council Board on Long Life Development Affairs defines employees' social responsibility as "the commitment of business communities of bringing their contribution to long life development collaborating with the employees, their families, the local community and the society as a whole in order to improve the life quality of these ones."

Why would a company get involved in this kind of projects? Beyond the social duty which the organizations have towards the communities they are a part of, such programs are true marketing instruments that bring undeniable image benefits to the ones who start running them. Thus the companies attain a "human face" in the eyes of the consumers and they become more than simply makers of consumer goods and service providers.

In Romania too companies have understood the advantages of corporate social responsibility. Some contests are exclusively supported by certain firms and sponsoring is no longer anything new to the Romanian public. The actions in which the firms get involved (without any financial gain, but an image one) are close to the field or the image those companies are promoting.

Ecological marketing without any doubt represents a strategic option which all firm managers and consumers should take into account. The subordination of all marketing attitudes and activities to the quality life and environment protection imperatives cannot have a circumstantial character; it is a condition for long term success.

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