

## ENVIRONMENT &amp; LOCAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Environment became one of the global issues, in the meaning that the planet is starting to be seen as a huge macro-ecosystem, sensible on political decisions, social and environmental, which are made on different parts of earth, is enough to mention the negative development due to deforestation process, biodiversity impoverishment, wastes management etc. Environmental communication or information on environmental issues should be an essential element as long as the environment is considered an essential element on defining citizen's rights and obligations

**Key words:** *Environment, sustainable development, ecosystem, biodiversity, communication, environment statements, deforestation.*

**1. Introduction**

Environment is considered one of the most important social issues, jointly with the politic, in a wider level than the local one and in a planetary level where it is needed the improvement of life quality: public opinion should have been warned upon the effect that technology has in their life.

Ecological calamity and urbanistic transformation, and if we can say, less the industrial once in our country, has raised the people's acknowledge on a good environment letting them understand that the development, if it is oriented through the poor management of wastes which are dangerous for the planet, could be fatal for the planet's inhabitants.

Environment is gradually becoming a key point in the international level, as conferences theme, studies and continuous monitoring subject.

These worries are highlighting even more the need that environment should be a global issue which effects governmental orientation or citizen's care on having a strong influence to the environment protection.

**2. Institutions & Environmental Communication**

Several environmental problems in local level in our country, to reduce the negative activities on the environment, can be solved only through an environmental protection policy and legislative measures. The strategy for sustainable local development should address problems not only to fix what has happened but to be focused on the prevention of activities which will impact the environmental and social quality and also to production and consume manner. The common aim should be the sensitization to a common problem which will stimulate effective feedback to the citizens. Even though there is an increasing awareness of citizens, the sensitivity of public opinion about environmental topics, behaviors and life style, do not show this. In practice, if such customers are aware of environment preserving importance, the contrary happens and they are not willing to do so.

It is the duty of the Government and Municipalities to be concentrated on environmental problems and is their duty to update the population about the dangers that presents a distorted environment and advantages of a healthy one for all citizens, starting from everyday actions where everyone

has the ability to do and that significantly contributes negatively or positively on the environment and natural resources.

**3. Evolution of Environmental Communication & International Environmental Strategies**

Propagation of environmental culture means promoting action to develop knowledge of the environment and natural resources based on scientific data and the continuing need on their defense, by stimulating a collective growth process in order to promote a durable growth, able to "meet" the requirements of present and future generation<sup>1</sup>. This development is based on the close requirements relationship between environment, economy and society to face with global and local problems for using of natural resources in different countries. Many environmental problems are a result of inappropriate and excessive use of natural resources.

To analyze various aspects related to Environment and Sustainable Local Development, it's necessary to be considered the following arguments:

- a. Environmental culture and sustainable local development;
- b. International Strategies;
- c. Strategies of the EU;
- d. Instruments for a sustainable development.

**4.1 Environmental culture and sustainable local development.**

In recent years have been strengthened and improved the communication, information, training and education, which enable the transmitting of knowledge on the environment and the skills acquired for all powerful social users. These activities<sup>2</sup> induce a significant contribution to the process, which favors the way toward sustainability, supporting the promotion of environmental culture.<sup>2</sup>In this context the strategic documents and programs identify the sensitization actions, information, education and training as indirect instruments on building the community participation to improve the lifestyle process and the current models of consumer's behavior, identified as a priority of damages caused to the environment. Environmental education should

<sup>1</sup> Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987

<sup>2</sup> Luigina Martori, *per una pedagogica ecologica. Prospettive teoriche e ricerche empiriche sull'educazione ambientale*, Milano, 2001

be a collective learning process and should include all citizens and subjects of society (universities, enterprises, consumers etc ...) with the following common objectives:

- *Environmental sensitization;*
- *encouragement of a correct environmental behavior;*
- consumers encouragement for a sustainable local development

#### 4.2 International Strategy

The necessity to face the environmental problems beside the necessity to guarantee social and economic development has encouraged various world organizations to undertake actions through strategies of environmental protection and sustainable development. The two main documents issued by the United Nations conference for environment and sustainable development are:

- **Statement on Environmental and Sustainable Development;**
- **Agenda 21**

#### Statement on Environmental and Sustainable Development:

The Statement emphasizes the rights and responsibilities<sup>3</sup> that States should undertake to the global environment protection. Specifically, the statement underlines that the human rights are in the focus of interest for a sustainable development and environmental protection and should be an integral part of the development process. Other key points are: the principle of "precautionary measures" and the principle of "who pollutes pays".

The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro was unprecedented for a UN conference, in terms of both its size and the scope of its concerns. Twenty years after the first global environment conference, the UN sought to help Governments rethink economic development and find ways to halt the destruction of irreplaceable natural resources and pollution of the planet. Hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life were drawn into the Rio process. They persuaded their leaders to go to Rio and join other nations in making the difficult decisions needed to ensure a healthy planet for generations to come.

#### Agenda 21

Agenda 21 is a "program" for the 21<sup>st</sup> century action directed by the International Community, UN, Governments, NGOs and private sectors who deal with the existing inequalities between countries facing with environmental degradation, promoting a concept of sustainability which includes ecological aspect for the economy and social life. The document underlines the necessity to give a greater importance to the interest groups role and lend the central role to the Local Authorities in achieving sustainable development goals, starting with a consultation process for the adoption of Agenda 21.

The notion of "sustainable development", according to the definition, means satisfying the requirements of the present generation without endangering the possibility of future generations to satisfy their personal requirements. The two

main goals of the sustainable development according to Agenda 21 are<sup>4</sup>:

1. fulfillment of requirements for economic, social, cultural, political and healthy life of residents, and
2. to control or limit the impact of human activities on the living environment, prohibiting degradation and wastage of natural resources.

The document identifies, among other things, the main strategic actions and means to achieve the objectives for environmental protection. With the Goteborg European Council Regulation (2001), starts the European strategy for sustainable development which underlines the necessary reorientation of public and private investment towards new technologies aimed at preventing the environmental degradation and resource impoverishment.

#### 5. PROBLEMS FACING KOSOVA

Besides the economical crisis Kosova is in a deep environmental crisis and the consequences are obvious every day we live. We are daily witnesses to pollution, deforestation and impoverishment of biodiversity and every day we are actors of environmental impurity.

Kosovo has not yet a genuine strategy to protect the environment and are not defined laws which will regulate:

- *Environment quality and quality of life in urban environments;*
- *Protection and sustainable improvement of nature and biodiversity;*
- *Waste Management;*
- *Public sensitization.*

We are in 2011 and we still don't have a report on the environmental situation and the people are not aware about the environmental situation as well as for the threat of the actual environment. According to the K.A.E.P. (Kosovo's Agency for Environment Protection) only in Pristina the pollution rate is 3-6 times greater than the allowed rate.

##### 5.1 Pollution from energy sectors

Energy sector is, noticeably, responsible for environment pollution in Kosovo. The biggest problems are related to pollutants emissions (which are the pollution cause in urban areas), acidification, ozone presence, etc. The problems regarding the environmental pollution as a result of energy sectors are the follow<sup>5</sup>:

- *Genuine organization of environmental management;*
- *Air, water, soil pollution;*
- *Outdated technology and no maintaining of KEK facilities.*

##### 5.2 Mining and the Environment

Effects of mining industry on the environment in Kosovo are difficult to be determined because of incomplete data since 1999. Serious problems are industrial dump sites, hazardous materials and water pollution from mining leakage.

##### 5.3 Transportation

<sup>3</sup> Rio Declaration on environment and sustainable development

<sup>4</sup> This is a principle which has emerged in the EU Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development through Agenda 21.

Transportation is pollutant of the air, water and soil. The consequences are: climate change, noises, biodiversity impoverishment and various calamities. Emissions from cars cause the pollution with heavy metals. This is a consequence of the use of leaded petrol and outdated cars<sup>5</sup>

#### 5.4 Agriculture

Industrial pollution from Trepca complex, the power plants in "Obiliq" but also other smaller pollutants represent serious threats to the agriculture. The water and soil contamination from waste landfills also represent another environmental problems with a direct implication on the development of agriculture in Kosova<sup>7</sup>.

#### 5.5 Forestry

Illegal logging of forests constitutes a direct pressure on biodiversity, erosion, climate, as well as can be the impact of agriculture, industry and illegal construction. Uncontrolled and illegal logging of forests is a challenge for the institutions of Kosova<sup>8</sup>.

#### 5.6 Waste

In the past ten years the problems regarding the waste production have reached a high percentage and that as a result of improved economic conditions and population growth in urban areas. Production of waste is actually an important indicator of the societies' welfare, and presents the result of consumption process.

In modern societies this process is a risk and produces pressures in the function of pollution on each component of the environment: water, as a result of direct discharge or emissions' flux, in the air, because of organic wastes, emissions of pollutants due to the increased of transportation means, on soil, because of accidental or uncontrolled discharges with consequences to the environment and collectivity.

Diversifications of manufacturing processes also generate a multiplication of waste typologies with dangerous effects to environment. If the total amount of waste represents undoubtedly the impoverishment of natural resources, the impact on the environment depends not only by the quantity but also by the waste quality; the wastes hazardous substances, even in small amounts, can generate visible impacts on the environment.

What is visible in Kosovo is the large amount of wastes due to lack of a waste processing plant for recycling; this represents a risk to the nature but especially for the man. For a short time has been used waste separation process but this process failed due to lack of factory for recycling. Although waste

treatment is an expensive and difficult process this would significantly affect the reduction of the overall wastes<sup>9</sup>.

#### 5.7 Wastewater

The inability to resolve the issue of collection, evacuation and cleaning of wastewater in: Pristina, Gjiilan, Ferizaj, Prizren, Djakovica, Pec, Mitrovica, etc. .... directly affects their resources or related sources of drinking water.

#### 5.8 Biodiversity

Condition of flora and fauna in Kosovo according to the data and information is alarming. The information emphasize that the situation is getting worse and the causes of the biodiversity impoverishment in Kosovo are<sup>10</sup>:

- Illegal hunting;
- Negative man impact;
- Fishing;
- Destruction of natural habitats;
- Urbanization, transportation and tourism impact;
- Inappropriate medicinal plants collection.

### 6. Environment and Health

Environmental protection represents one of the key factors to population health. Health status of people is closely related with urban hygiene situation, which means the air, polluted soil: that is the result of insufficient supply of potable water, lack of sewage and discharge system, and waste accumulation.

Environmental risks besides as stated above are: ultraviolet radiation, climate and ecosystems changes, noises, constructions, agriculture and humans behavior. Diseases caused by these factors are: diarrhea, respiratory infections, asthma, cardiovascular diseases and the impact in nervous system.

The data<sup>11</sup> show that in all countries the population health can be significantly improved by reducing environmental risks: the whole world can avoided the death of about 13 million persons each year. No country is immune to this phenomenon.

In some countries, even a third of the diseases can be prevented by environmental improvements. In 23 countries more than 10% of deaths occurred as a result of water pollution and as a result of fuel in the kitchen.

The most affected persons are the children up to 5 years, who constitute 74% of deaths from diarrhea diseases and respiratory infections. To reduce in a significantly way the number of death should be taken concrete measures starting from the houses customs: the use of gas or electricity, use of ventilation and

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Public Services & Ministry of Trade and Industry

change some practices of life (for example, smoking away from children).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Social and economic situation of Kosova is well known and environmental issues and their resolution requires not only time but also big investments. We are a newly established State and our goal is the integration into the European Union but as it is known that would require the fulfillment of some certain basic conditions and among them is the environment issue.

During this study I hope to have mentioned some environmental problems facing Kosova today and below I give some of my suggestions to the environment improvements for the present situation. The first concrete steps that should be taken to improve the actual environment situation are::

**Strategy for Environmental Protection:** Government and competent authorities should develop a strategy to protect the environment which should be effective and fully realized in all its points. This strategy should be directed mostly at preventing activities that would affect environmental and social quality as well as the manner of production and consumption.

**Environmental Sensitization:** must constitute one of the elements and priorities of local governments in resolving or improving environmental conditions at municipal level. Informing the population for the environmental situation and the environmental advantages and risks must be considered a fundamental element of the rights and obligations of citizens.

Partners for implementation of an environmental project: Kosova has a deficit of environmental experts. With the existing experts and with the help of Environmental Protection Agency, public and private Research Centre, universities, public and private companies that perform environmental services, with the help of international experts can be drafted a project to prevent environmental degradation. It is the duty of the Government and Municipalities to concentrate on today environmental problems. Is their duty to indicate the consequences of a misused environment for the humans life and the advantages of a healthy environment, starting from the daily action of every person.

## CONCLUSION

Very often we think that the environmental pollution is a problem that involves only modern civilization, but in reality, as we saw above, for centuries the man has influenced negatively in environment, and here we are: every day in television, in newspapers we see and listen alarming news. Every day we see the smokes covering the cities, polluted waters of rivers and the use of fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture aggravating natural balance of soil.

Environmental situation in our country not only is in poor condition but risks to deteriorate even more in the future if we don't take concrete measures to protect and prevent actions that threat the environment and as a result the people's life.

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