

## SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH SOCIAL CHANGE

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**Abstract:** *The integration of the concept of sustainability in the economy of a country is the current desire all over the world. Modern business models, based on innovative technologies, have the role of generating sustainable products, services and processes, but also of creating added value. With a view to the intelligent use of resources, with the aim of preserving them and for the generations to come, companies, regardless of their size and object of activity, are trying to implement their business models through which "do more with less". This major objective can be achieved through the synergy of several aspects, mainly the use of innovative techniques and technologies, the use of ecological raw materials and renewable energy sources. However, the implementation of these ways of approaching a business is not possible without the acceptance and support of society. Building a sustainable society must be something that is accepted by its members. Only in this way the entrepreneurs' initiatives have a chance of being integrated into the economy. The present paper approaches sustainability from the perspective of the social changes necessary in order to integrate it into society.*

**Keywords:** *sustainability, social innovations, innovative technologies.*

**JEL Classification:** *Q56, O35, O32.*

### 1. Introduction

Planning the sustainable development of a society must focus on the implementation and maintenance of all aspects derived from the basic principles of sustainability, aspects that are applied in the daily activity of the members of a community

This paper tries to contribute to the identification of how sustainability should be integrated into the organizational culture. The development of organizations and society in general must shape their social behaviour in such a way as to assimilate in their personal lives as many "friendly" practices as possible with the environment.

Sustainability, considered as a science, aims to identify the interactions between global social and human systems, as well as to understand the mechanism that led to the degradation of these systems and the concomitant risks to the security and comfort of human beings (Steinfeld, Mino, 2009).

Integrating the concept of sustainability into daily activity requires a careful approach from all the factors involved. Only in this way, implementation and acceptance by community members can be successful. In order to use resources intelligently, with the aim of preserving them and for the generations to come, companies, regardless of their size and object of activity, are trying to implement business models that "do more with less".

This major objective can be achieved through the synergy of several aspects, mainly the use of innovative techniques and technologies, the use of ecological raw materials and renewable energy sources. However, the implementation of these ways of approaching a business is not possible without the acceptance and support of society.

Building a sustainable society must be something that is accepted by its members. Only in this way, the entrepreneurs' initiatives have a chance of being integrated into the economy.

All factors involved in the justification and application of sustainability decisions must base their actions on realistic information and data. In this sense, it is opportune to create an online statistical database, as comprehensive as possible.

This paper approaches sustainability from the perspective of the social changes necessary for its integration into society.

## 2. Sustainability from concept to practice

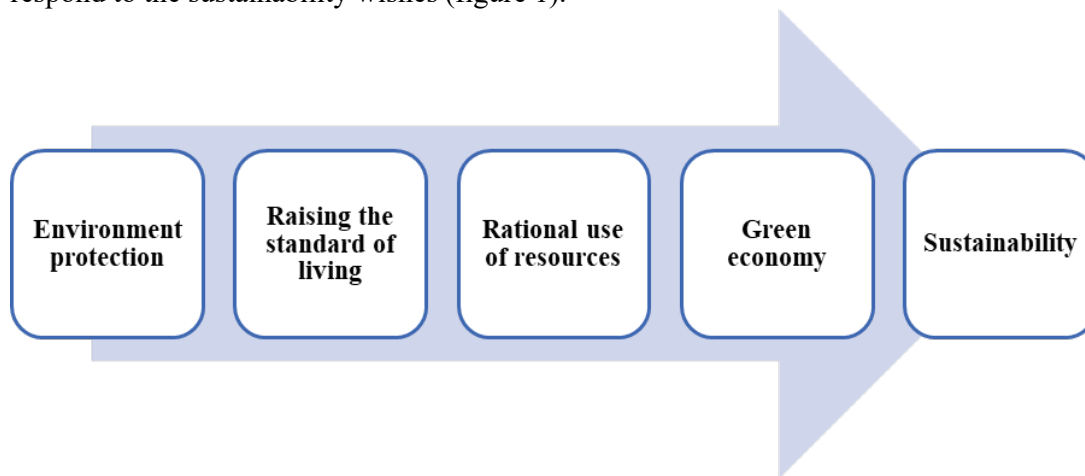
In order to limit the energy used in carrying out activities, as well as to reduce the resulting amount of waste, all organizations must implement, in their own activity, a series of measures with the role of contributing to limiting the impact on the environment.

These aspects can be achieved through actions carried out at the global level of the entire organization, but also at the individual level of each employee.

In order to succeed in developing sustainably, any society must succeed in implementing in the collective mind, the need to address environmental protection measures.

The problem of the deterioration of the environment by human activity has been recognized and addressed formally, worldwide, on the occasion of several joint activities of the UN member countries and not only.

During the works of these conferences, a series of topics were addressed that could respond to the sustainability wishes (figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Themes addressed within the UN conferences

The main milestones over time, at which the aspects of environmental protection, sustainability and sustainable development were identified and addressed, are:

- 1972, Stockholm – UN Conference on the Environment.
  - For the first time, 113 countries discussed in an organized way the effects of human activity on the environment, effects manifested through pollution, damage to the environment, flora and fauna
- 1983, the World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Commission, was established at the UN level.

Through its activities, this commission highlighted two essential aspects:

- Development must contribute to raising the standard of living of all members of the communities
- Development must be carried out without polluting the environment and without depleting resources

- 1992, Rio de Janeiro – UN Conference on Environment and Development.
  - The main message conveyed in the proceedings of this conference was "the necessary changes would only come about by changing our attitude and behaviour". The foundations of several international agreements have been laid.
- 2002, Johannesburg – United Nations Summit for Sustainable Development
  - During the works, the need to eradicate poverty, protect health, approach modern production and consumption models was emphasized.
- 2012, Rio de Janeiro – UN Conference on Sustainable Development.
  - New, modern themes were addressed regarding the green economy and the creation of an institutional framework for sustainable development
- 2015, New York – The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Sustainable Development Goals through a resolution called the 2030 Agenda
- 2022, Stockholm – "Stockholm+50" Summit
  - The proceedings of this conference marked the fiftieth anniversary of the first UN Conference addressing environmental issues.

### **3. Social changes necessary for the implementation of sustainability concepts**

Addressing the social changes necessary to implement sustainability concepts is a topical issue designed to highlight the synergy of several aspects, mainly the use of innovative techniques and technologies, the use of ecological raw materials and renewable energy sources.

The implementation of these ways of approaching a business is not possible without the acceptance and support of society.

The challenges to which members of society are constantly subjected, must generate solutions in the way each of us, at the individual or group level, deal with the problems of environmental protection, rational use of resources, health assurance, ecological approach of the economy and ultimately of long-term sustainability.

Sustainability is a concept that should become familiar to every member of a community.

In order to be able to put into practice the theoretical aspects addressed on the occasion of various international conferences, the members of a community and, in general, the members of society as a whole, must assume and assign a series of actions aimed at transforming their lifestyle into one as more sustainable.

At the national and international level, there are a number of projects that allocate the necessary funds to educate and raise awareness of the population in the field of sustainability (SNEM, 2023).

Sustainable development depends on several aspects. One of these, extremely important, refers to the population's ability to understand the need to apply concrete, well-defined measures in order to reduce the impact of human activity on the environment.

The approach to a sustainable lifestyle must not represent an illusion, but must become more and more, a long-term decision, on a personal and group level.

Living sustainably does not have to mean giving up on modern aspects of life or returning to outdated ways of doing things. On the contrary, sustainability must generate modern techniques and technologies, innovative approaches to production activities, economic, but also those aimed at everyday life.

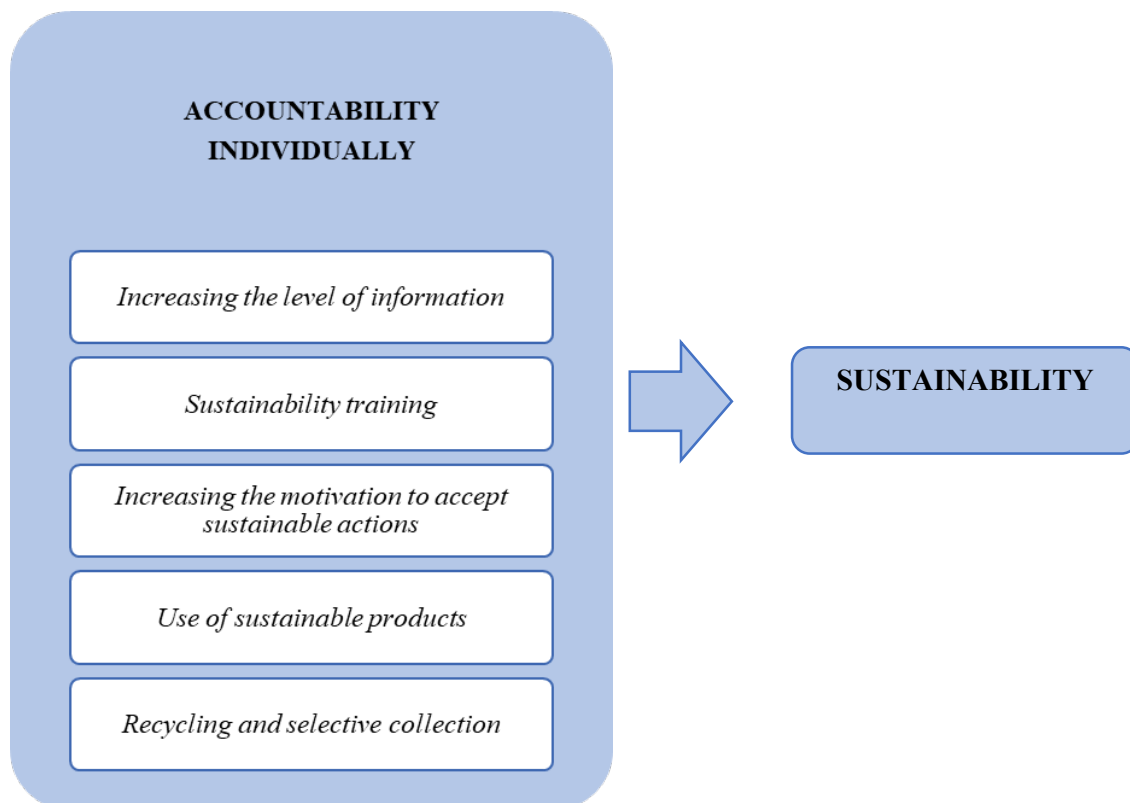
Moreover, at the level of economic organizations, sustainability is seen as a major objective. In order to identify how companies deal with sustainability issues, the 2014/95

directive was adopted at the European Union level. This document specifies the obligation of companies with over 500 employees to report annually a series of information on how social responsibility and sustainability activities are approached.

The main social changes aimed at generating sustainability are:

- adopting a sustainable, environmentally friendly lifestyle
- limiting consumption to the level necessary for decent living
- readjustment to a simpler lifestyle that does not require high energy consumption
- the implementation and use of modern, innovative technologies
- selective waste collection
- recycling
- increasing the level of education in the field
- focusing on quality over quantity
- The transition from the linear economy to the circular economy.

In general, the solution to sustainability issues is individual responsibility. The analysis and interpretation of certain aspects related to sustainability can lead to the identification of the main social changes that can maximize the integration of sustainability concepts in the collective mind (figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Aspects of individual responsibility in the field of sustainability

Building a sustainable society must be something that is accepted by its members. Only in this way the entrepreneurs' initiatives have a chance of being integrated into the economy.

All factors involved in the justification and application of sustainability decisions must base their actions on realistic information and data. In this sense, it is appropriate to maintain an online statistical database, as comprehensive as possible.

Within the Department for Sustainable Development within the General Secretariat of the Government, the Romanian Sustainability Code was developed (figure 3). This is a tool, which any organization can use for free in order to register a sustainability report, it meets the requirements of the European Union.

In 2022, the CSRD Directive was published, which refers to the reporting that organizations must carry out, regarding aspects related to sustainability.

In this sense, with the financial year 2024, all organizations that have more than 500 employees, have the obligation to report aspects related to:

- environment
- social / personal
- human rights
- fighting corruption
- Bribery.

From 2025, these obligations will also apply to companies with over 250 employees.



**Figure 2.** Romanian Sustainability Code - Reporting platform

Source: [Home \(gov.ro\)](https://www.gov.ro) [Despre Codul Sustenabilității \(gov.ro\)](https://www.gov.ro)

#### 4. Conclusions

The implementation of sustainability concepts is a priority theme in the future development of organizations. To be able to achieve the synergy of several aspects, mainly the use of innovative techniques and technologies, the use of ecological raw materials and renewable energy sources, all the factors involved must have access to real, complete and relevant information.

The challenges to which members of society are constantly subjected, must generate solutions in the way each of us, at the individual or group level, deal with the problems of

environmental protection, rational use of resources, health assurance, ecological approach of the economy and ultimately of long-term sustainability.

In order to monitor the aspects of sustainability, organizations must produce mandatory or voluntary, sustainability reports that will contribute to the creation of a statistical database accessible to interested parties. Based on this data, organizations can reassess their activities in order to apply more firm measures that generate sustainability now and in the future.

Organizations and society in general can only develop harmoniously based on the principles of sustainability. In this sense, all members of society, salaried or not, must shape their social behaviour in such a way as to assimilate in their personal life as many "friendly" practices with the environment as possible. The role of the organizations is to encourage this type of practices, to familiarize as many people as possible with the need to apply these measures as urgently as possible.

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