

## EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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**ABSTRACT.** Faculty for Management, Zajecar, Serbia, Bulgarian partner and a number of European Universities and institutions with experience in education and implementation of sustainable development, have established cooperation in order to develop a series of courses in "Strategic Leadership For Sustainable Societies" for participants from neighboring districts in Serbia and Bulgaria. The aim of the program is to educate policy makers, municipal officers and elected officials, as well as NGO staff who are, or should be, directly responsible for local sustainable development planning and implementation. Internationally recognized methodology for guiding strategy towards sustainability is used to facilitate process of de-coupling environmental impacts and degradation from economic growth, and to advance innovation and business to operate in more eco-efficient way. There are three basic interrelated applications of this methodology: strategic visioning, building a learning platform and integrating sustainable practices through involvement, action, innovation and continuous learning. Furthermore, this program will support organizations interested in adopting sustainable development practice into their management framework.

### ОБУЧЕНИЕ ПРЕЗ ЦЕЛИЯ ЖИВОТ

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**РЕЗЮМЕ:** Факултетът по мениджмънт в Зайчар, Сърбия, български партньори и много европейски университети и институции с опит в образованието и осъществяване на обучение през целия живот, установяват сътрудничество, за да развият серия от курсове по „Стратегическо ръководство за стабилни общества“ за участници от съседните на Сърбия и България, региони. Целта на програмата е обучение на политици, общински служители и служители на изборна длъжност, както и персонала на неправителствени организации, които са и трябва да бъдат директно отговорни за непрекъснатото развитие и реализиране на проекти на местно ниво.

Международно призната методология за стратегическо управление на обучението през целия живот, е използвана за да намали процеса на въздействие върху околната среда, деградацията на обществото вследствие бързо развиващата се икономика, да насърчи новаторството и създаде среда за по-ефективен бизнес. Три са основните приложения на тази методология, които са взаимосвързани: стратегическа далновидност, изграждаща учебна платформа и интегриращи практики чрез участие, действие и въвеждане на нови методи за непрекъснато обучение. Освен това тази програма ще поддържа интереса на организацията в усвояване на практиката за обучение през целия живот в тяхната управленска мрежа.

### Introduction

Creating a sustainable future, economically, socially and environmentally requires governments, society, organizations and individuals to rethink how we use our resources, how we interact, and what we want to achieve. Some of our behaviors are causing irreparable damage that threatens the continued survival of our species and planet. Sustainable development offers the opportunity of a new course, towards a better future (SIGMA project, 2003).

Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future to meet their own needs. There has been a major shift in European Union (EU) policy during the past decade in respect of employment, education, training and the environment. Much of these changes are encapsulated in the EU environmental policy framework the Sixth Environmental Action Program – EAP (Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice EU, 2001). Throughout the new EAP, greater emphasis is placed on the integration of environmental concerns into wider economic and social

policies through the new policy doctrine of sustainable development. This contains some wide-ranging proposals including a commitment to including sustainable development as the core concern of all EU policies. There is also an increasing body of evidence that companies that take a more sustainable approach enjoy positive benefits (World Bank, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2001c). The nature of these rewards varies for different organizations and is dependent on their particular sector, strategy and stage of development. In the long term, sustainable development will have benefits for both the organizations themselves and the economy as a whole, as the competitive advantage of reputational benefits, operational efficiency, innovation and lasting value take effect. It is crucial to enable sustainable development to become an integral part of the mainstream business model of the future.

### Sustainable development in Serbia and Bulgaria

Principles of good governance in municipalities, including effective and efficient use of resources, are the most critical to strengthening the democratic process in Serbia. One of the greatest challenges in this process lies in the lack of professional and organizational knowledge relating to internationally recognized campaigns for the sustainable

development of cities and towns, notably the Local Agenda 21 campaign (LA21) articulated at the 1992 Earth Summit (UN Conference on Environment and Development) in Rio de Janeiro, and developed into Local Action 21 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. Serbian municipalities are not currently equipped—in material or human resources—to plan for sustainable development and participate in this worldwide movement to formulate action plans, avert environmental devastation, and assure the long-term viability and stability of societies. In December 2004, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia adopted a set of environmental protection laws that are in line with the EU Directives and their adoption is a significant step forward to harmonizing with the European Standards regulating environmental protection. In parallel, some initial work has been done on drafting the National sustainable development strategy. Local governments in Serbia developed their own strategic framework for sustainable development. LSDS formulation process was done by Serbian Association of Towns and Municipalities (Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities – SKGO), supported by Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities – KS) under the Program for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development in Serbian Towns and Municipalities 2004 – 2006. Local sustainable development strategy paper was adopted at the National Conference of Local Sustainable Development in Belgrade, May 26th 2005.

The Government of Bulgaria has also endorsed Agenda 21, the plan of action for Sustainable Human Development agreed by the international community on the occasion of the 1992 Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and development. In the wider context of its Environment Strategy, Bulgarian Government has initiated the implementation of a Capacity 21 program with UNDP support. The Capacity 21 project is currently being implemented under the coordination of a National Commission for Sustainable Human Development chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. It aims at promoting a structured and constructive policy dialogue to identify the Bulgaria specificities of SHD, the appropriate approaches to achieve it, including through the implementation of a Bulgarian Agenda 21. Recently, some efforts to participate in sustainable development movement have been made in both Serbian and Bulgarian municipalities in neighboring districts Zajecar and Vidin, but they still suffer from the lack of contemporary strategic planning mechanisms. There is a considerable gap between long-term plans (obligatory by the law) and the short-term “project documentation” and annual investment programs prepared by the municipalities. We have developed the program “Strategic Leadership For Sustainable Societies” with aim to educate policy makers, municipal officers and elected officials, as well as NGO staff who are, or should be, directly responsible for local sustainable development planning and implementation. Furthermore, number of organizations in industry, tourism, agro business, education, health, communications, press, entrepreneurship etc., in both Serbia and Bulgaria, will benefit from the implementation of this highly structured and practical management system with defined methodology for sustainable development interventions.

## Methods

### “Social marketing” methods

Although strategies of sustainable development have been successfully presented at government level, in neighboring Serbian and Bulgarian municipalities Zajecar and Vidin there is still a general lack of awareness about sustainability at all levels, and inadequate coordination among possible implementing subjects including general public, municipal officers, NGOs, professional association and, more importantly, among legislators and key-decision makers. There is crucial role of the communication component to gain the understanding and support of these key actors. It is also dependent on the reach of existing mass media and on the availability of other channels of communication at the community level. The awareness and practices of people with regard to culture of sustainability need special attention. Basically, we need to apply commercial marketing techniques to achieve a social objective. Although the primary objectives of consumer marketing and social marketing sometimes differ very significantly, their techniques are becoming increasingly similar. It is essential that social marketing of sustainable development become a collective effort involving environment and sustainable development professionals along with specialists in marketing management and communication.

### Sustainable Development Methodology

There is a wide range of existing codes of conduct and best practice, business principles and guidelines for sustainable development. In the process of planning our activities we have used the framework derived from a number of key sources including: The Rio Declaration, World Business Council on Sustainable Development UN Global Compact, The Global Sullivan Principles, The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, or Amnesty International's, Human Rights (Sida, 1997, 1998, Dfes 2003, WR, 2001). As a guiding methodology for introduction of sustainable development we choose the SIGMA project ( SIGMA Guiding Principles and SIGMA Management Framework, 2003), and The Natural Step Framework (TNS). The SIGMA Project – (Sustainability Integrated Guidelines for Management) was launched in 1999 by the British Standards Institution, Forum for the Future, and AccountAbility, with the support of the UK Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). A key issue for organizations that want to respond to the challenge posed by sustainable development is how to take effective action. SIGMA provides a clear, practical, integrated framework for organizations. It allows an organization to build on what it has, to take a flexible approach according to its circumstances and to reduce duplication and waste by seeing how different elements can fit together. The SIGMA Management Framework is a cycle of four flexible implementation phases: leadership and vision; planning; delivery; and review, feedback and reporting. Organizations may enter and move through the phases at different speeds and give different phases, different emphasis depending on their individual circumstances, the availability of resources and the level of maturity of their sustainable development policies, strategies and programs. The SIGMA Management Framework may be used: to integrate existing management systems, building on existing approaches, to establish a stand-alone management system as guidance to deepen and broaden existing management practice without the formal structure of a

management system. In order to ensure compatibility with existing practice, the SIGMA Management Framework is modeled on approaches wide-spread in formal and informal management systems. The 'Plan, Do, Check, Act' model that underpins the SIGMA Management Framework is familiar to many organizations and has the benefit of being both practical and effective in delivering improved organizational performance.

The TNS Framework is a methodology developed by The Natural Step (Checkland, 1999). The Natural Step is an international organization that helps organizations move strategically toward sustainability. It enables organizations to create optimal strategies for dealing with the present-day situation, by incorporating a perspective of a sustainable future. Today's perception of what can be achieved never determines the direction of change, solely pace. This results in investments and activities that not only move the organization toward sustainability, but also maximize short-term profitability and long-term flexibility. The Natural Step framework is used by over 100 organizations, including many global corporations in Europe and the United States, to provide strategic direction for their sustainability initiatives. The framework does not prescribe detailed actions. Once an organization understands the framework it identifies and specifies the detailed means by which to achieve the strategy, because it knows its business best. The steps in the planning process are: understanding and discussing the system conditions for sustainability, describing and discussing how the company relates to the system conditions in today's situation, creating a vision of how the company will fulfill its customers needs in the future while complying with the system conditions, and specifying a program of actions that will take the company from today's situation to the future vision.

**Program activities**

The aim of the educational part of the program for each participant is to have an understanding of framework for sustainable development and be able to apply the framework, in a range of situations, for an analysis of problems as well as creation of solutions; to develop enhanced leadership capabilities and the ability to inform and empower through an improved awareness of organizational and personal learning as well as improved presentation, facilitation and coaching skills. The main activities of the program are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

STRATEGIC VISIONING CONFERENCE
TRAINING OF TRAINERS
WORKSHOPS FOR PROFESSIONS
PILOT PROJECTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SD IN ORGANIZATIONS
IMPLEMENTATION OF PILOT PROJECTS FOR SD IN ORGANIZATIONS
FINAL CONFERENCE

*Activity "Strategic visioning conference"*

The initial step in this program, a part of strategic visioning process, is the organization of the top level Strategic Visioning Conference. The goal of this activity is to present the main

concepts of sustainable development to Policy makers and Opinion leaders in municipalities and business communities and raise awareness of general public in neighboring communities in Serbia and Bulgaria. Structure of the conference is based on "Social marketing" method developed by marketing and communications specialists. Presentations at the conference are based on interrelated themes:

- Principles of sustainability.
- The business benefits of sustainable development.
- Action planning.

Expected outcome of the conference is to disseminate effective messages about sustainable development and create shared strategic vision and compelling aspirations within the framework of sustainable society in Serbian and Bulgarian municipalities.

*Activity "Training of the trainers"*

"Training of the Trainers" is organized in cooperation with European Universities and institutions with experience in education and implementation of sustainable development (The Natural Step, SIGMA, Professional Practice for Sustainable Development (PP4SD) (Baines, 2001). Training structure is based on framework developed by Martin and Hall (Martin, 2002, 2004).

*Activity "Workshop for professions "*

Trainers who complete training in sustainable development will develop original educational platform for particular business enterprises, based on the same shared principles. Their obligation is to deliver one or two day Workshops for professionals adopted to meet the needs of their specific audience including intercultural management principles. Workshops for professions will be organized for members of management teams from: industry, tourism, agro business, education, health, and communications, entrepreneurs, municipal officers, NGOs. Participants of this course will be responsible for delivering the concept of sustainability and development of projects for implementation of sustainable development in their own organizations.

*Activity "Development of pilot projects for implementation of SD in organizations "*

Expert team will be established to support organizations interested in adopting sustainable development practice into their management framework. This activity will be based on The SIGMA Management Framework, and additional education will be organized for participants from these organizations. At the same time expert team will support development of particular projects for implementation of sustainable development measures in organizations.

*Activity "Implementation of pilot projects for SD in organizations"*

Few small scale pilot programs developed in previous phase of the project will be implemented in organizations. Following activities in organizations will be supported: measures to promote energy and water saving, efficient waste management, rationalization of consumption and encouragement of usage of renewable resources in the facilities, measures to promote healthy life styles.

### Activity "Final conference"

Final conference is organized on the same "Social marketing" principles developed for Strategic Visioning Conference. This kind of the events has an important purpose in raising public awareness for sustainability. The main activity of the conference will include media presentation of the Project activities. Exhibitions of Sustainable Development Implementation projects will contribute to audiovisual effects of presentations.

### Discussion

Although both Serbian and Bulgarian governments have adopted laws in line with the EU Directives and made a significant step forward to harmonizing with the European Standards regulating environmental protection, municipalities in neighboring districts Zajecar and Vidin are not currently equipped - in material or human resources - to plan for sustainable development and participate in this worldwide movement to formulate action plans, avert environmental devastation, and assure the long-term viability and stability of societies. Municipalities still suffer from the lack of contemporary strategic planning mechanisms. This project is pursued with the aim to educate policy makers, municipal officers and elected officials, as well as NGO staff directly responsible for local sustainable development planning and implementation. Furthermore, numerous organizations in both Serbia and Bulgaria, in fields of industry, tourism, agro business, education, health, communications, entrepreneurship will benefit from the implementation of highly structured and practical management system and defined methodology for sustainable development interventions. Faculty for Management Zajecar will make a substantial contribution to a network of practitioners in sustainable development who will be able to implement their knowledge in

their own organizations. Additional outcome of the program will be public awareness on both sides of the border, information and experience exchanges between Serbian and Bulgarian partners, bilateral visits, support for Serbian- Bulgarian business partnership network as well as development of joint projects and presentation.

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