

THE ROLE OF ISO 14001 IN ACHIEVING THE LOCAL SOCIO- ECOSYSTEM SUSTAINABILITY

Over the past twenty years, sustainable development has become one of the main management trends at the micro and macro levels. The stability of socio-economic systems is determined by the unity of three aspects: economic, ecologic, and social. There is still an imbalance between the components of sustainability. Preferences are given to the economic component at all levels of the socio-economic systems. The situation in EU countries is generally better than in Eastern European countries (non-EU countries), China, and some other Asian countries. Research [1] show the growing commitment of business to the concept of sustainable development, interpreting it as a way to increase competitiveness. Accelerating the development of environmental management at enterprises really increases their competitiveness.

ISO 14001 is the most popular tool for creating an environmental management system. The purpose of ISO 14001 is to comply with measures to protect the environment and prevent its pollution while maintaining a balance with corporate goals. That is, the company achieves an external environmental effect due to the environmental management of internal business processes. Even if enterprises go beyond internal business processes to create and application of environmental innovations, these actions are tied to the business processes of the enterprise through supply chains. In contrast to research on environmental and sustainable supply chains, our research aimed to find out the possibilities of increasing the environmental impact of enterprises in a regional context.

The most common reason for the implementation of ISO 14001 is the desire to create a better image of the company and, thus, contribute to improving financial results.

All respondents are sure that the company has not yet used all its opportunities to improve the ecology of the place where it is located. But not all of them believe that the implementation of environmental policy requires the implementation of ISO 14001.

Approximately 20% of respondents who have implemented the ISO 14001 standard at their company believe that it is not necessary to implement ISO 14001, that the same results can be achieved with the help of other systems. This group of respondents is characterized by sensitivity to the request of customers for the availability of ISO 14001. Also, among them, there are more often those which are ready to go beyond their own environmental policy in order to improve the ecosystem of the area where the enterprise is located.

Over the past decade, external legal pressure on EU-countries' enterprises to comply with environmental regulations has increased significantly. Therefore, from our point of view, clients may no longer feel the need to control the internal tools of environmental management of the enterprise, but they are much more demanding about

the effectiveness of environmental management. Does this attitude of customers cancel out the internal need of the enterprise to apply ISO 14001? ISO 14001 remains a reliable tool for the systematization and optimization of processes, especially for those enterprises that do not carry out systematic environmental activities, but will find a motive for their activation. The survey revealed certain benefits of ISO 14001 implementation practices. For example, companies that have implemented ISO 14001 pay more attention to identifying stakeholders and maintaining relationships with them. This not only improves the image of the enterprise, but also helps to improve environmental performance, which ultimately has a positive effect on the ecosystem of the area where the enterprise is located.

Unfortunately, the rate of development of the standard lags behind the development of the external context of the company's activity. However, even the modern version of the standard gives quite a wide field for enterprise initiative.

The respondents determine that there are problems with the motivation of the company's employees to make proposals for improving the environmental effects of the company's activities. But this is not a common problem. The main obstacles for more active activities to protect and improve the environment in the place where the enterprise is located are external. The main reason is the difficulty in accessing sources of financing for such initiatives. In addition, the lack of knowledge and experience on how to become a coordinator or participant in a multilateral environmental project is indicated. This indirectly indicates the weak activity of the local government, which should be the main initiator and motivating side of the organization and implementation of projects to improve the city's ecosystem. The local government should involve independent environmental organizations in this activity, should initiate the dissemination of knowledge and information in the business sector about the possibilities of participation of enterprises in such projects.

In general, the respondents evaluate the environmental policy implemented by the local government of the city where the company is located as meeting the environmental problems of the city to a certain extent. That is, the assessment is not very high. The survey revealed that enterprises are in no way involved in the formation of the environmental policy of the city (locality) where it is located. Also, the survey showed that enterprises do not participate or participate from time to time in the implementation of environmental projects of the city (locality) in which it is located. That is, it can be concluded that the potential of ecologically active enterprises is very weakly used at the local (local) level to improve the ecosystem in which the enterprise is located. There are reasons to assume the absence of permanent connections between local authorities and enterprises in the local socio-ecosystem.

References

1. Kiron, D., Kruschwitz, N., Haanaes, K., & von Streng Velken, I. (2011). Sustainability nears a tipping point. *MIT sloan management review*.