

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION---TRANSLATING AND RECOVERING THE ETHICAL NORMS OF ALIVE IN LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK OF ROMANIA, CROATIA, POLAND AND SLOVENIA

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Abstract: The article reflects the main legislative framework and preoccupations for environmental protection and durable development in four European countries: Romania, Croatia, Poland and Slovenia. There it is an analyse around the question: The national legislative law is it constructed on ethical norms and values which should regulate the human behaviour and can be learned in the schools by a young age? The article brings in attention the ethical dimension as solid base for construction of a durable future of Terra life and try to reconnect the moral norms of alive with the legislation which it is not optional as the moral one.

Keywords: sustainable development; environmental education; ethics; human behaviour; life;

I. Introduction

Sustainable development basically means planning economic and social growth and well-being taking in account that such growth does not endanger environment and natural resources for the future generations. The term itself was used for the first time^{*40} in today's meaning when it has become clear that overusing and exploiting natural resources, which started with the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century, would lead to threatening the existence of human race itself. The Stockholm Environmental Conference from 1972 is the moment when it is recognized that human activities contribute to environmental degradation, which threatens the future of mankind. A few years later, in 1983, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) started its activities such as a report on environment and the global problems facing the world to the year 2000 and beyond, and proposed strategies for a sustainable development.

The term "sustainable development" began to become very well known only after the International Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), organized by the United Nations in Rio de Janeiro in the summer of 1992. Also known as the "Earth Summit", the conference was attended by representatives of about 170 countries and it led to the draft of the *Agenda 21* that is being used by the United Nations as a tool for promoting the concept of sustainable development.

Sustainable development has become an objective of the European Union, starting in 1997, when it was included in the Treaty of Maastricht; although the reason for such new worldwide concern for Mother Earth might have been selfishly oriented on humans, it has brought together all contemporary scientists and environmental activists to design a new global framework (*Agenda 21*^{*41}) for maintaining the Life as we know it today.

⁴⁰ UN World Commission on Environment and Development's, Brundtland Commission, Report Our Common Future, 1987.

⁴¹ Action plan of the UN regarding sustainable development produced at Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (*United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – UNCED*), 1992; 21 refers to the 21st century

It is widely considered that the *Homo Sapiens* appeared somewhere between 400 000 and 250 000 years ago. The Earth, however, is much older (4,6 billion years). During its history a lot of species appeared, dominated and then disappeared, just to mention dinosaurs. Let us be honest, it is quite clear that the human race is just a subtenant on this gentle and hospitable cradle of life. The Earth has been here before us and will be there, after us. *She* is self-sufficient. We are highly dependent on the tuned and greased mechanism called ecosystem, where every living organism has its place and purpose, is dependent and dependable. " *Ultimately – as quantum physics [has] showed so dramatically – there are no parts at all. What we call a part is merely a pattern in an inseparable web of relationships.*"
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II. Legislative Framework regarding durable environment and environment protection in four European countries: Romania, Croatia, Poland and Slovenia

II.1. Legislative Framework of Romania

In **Romania** environmental protection issues are imperative to be put in place, especially as a result of the intense local pollution of the environment by factories and agriculture or by overpopulated cities, as well as by the existence of cross-border pollution, which have led to deregulations in the ecosystems and worsening of people's living conditions. Without environmental protection sustainable development cannot be ensured. Sustainable development includes environmental protection, and environmental protection determines sustainable development.

The environmental protection strategy is to be found, through its core principles, in the ***National Sustainable Development Strategy of Romania 2013 – 2020 – 2030***. The document, which was debated and later approved by the Romanian government on 12th of November 2008, follows the methodological recommendations of the European Commission, and represents a joint project of the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development, and the United Nations Development Program through the National Centre for Sustainable Development. The strategy sets out concrete objectives for moving towards a new model of progress – sustainable development – oriented towards a continuous improvement of people's lives and their relationships in harmony with the natural environment.

In this document, the parties involved made sure to note the 'then' current socio-economic state of Romania, as well as its natural capital. Regarding the natural environment, they pointed out important particularities that our country brings forth, such as the fact that in Romania five out of the eleven bio-geographic regions of Europe and 54% of the Carpathians mountain range can be found, 97.8% of the rivers are collected by the Danube which flows for 1,075 kilometres on Romanian territory and a valuable input of plant and animal species that had become extinct or rare in other parts of Europe.

In Romania, environmental protection has emerged as a self-sustaining area in our national politics only in 1991, when the Ministry of the Environment was founded for the first time; in 1992, the first official document setting out the national objectives in this sector was drawn up - "The National Environmental Protection Strategy" – which was updated in 1996 and in 2002. Other fundamental legislation in the area of environmental protection are:

- *Law No. 17/1990 regarding the legal treatment of internal sea going waters, territorial sea and contiguous areas;*

⁴² Fritjof Capra: Web of Life; 1996, p.6

- *Law No. 82/1993 regarding the establishment of the "Danube Delta" Biosphere Reservation;*
- *Law No. 137/1995 on the environmental protection;*
- *Waters Law No. 107/1996;*
- *Law No. 103/1996 regarding the protection of hunting grounds;*
- *Law No. 111/1996 regarding nuclear activities;*
- *Law No. 107/1999 for the approval of the Government Ordinance No. 81/1998 regarding the improvement by afforestation of weathered lands;*
- *Law No. 192/2001 on fisheries, fishing and aquaculture;*
- *Mountain Law No 347/2004;*
- *The Forest code (Law No. 46/2008);*
- *Law No. 132/2010 regarding selective waste collection in public institutions;*
- *Law No. 211/2011 on waste management.*

Other Government Ordinances:

- *OU 243/2000 on atmosphere protection;*
- *OU 195/2005 on environment protection;*
- *OG 47/2005 on disposal of animal waste;*
- *OG 41/2007 on marketing pesticides;*
- *HG 1132/2008 regarding batteries and accumulators and their disposal;*
- *OU 71/2010 on sea waters;*
- *HG 1037/2011 on disposal of electric and electronic waste.*

II.2. Legislative Framework of Croatia

One of the first documents voted by the Croatian Parliament which mentions sustainable development was the Declaration of Environmental Protection (1992). It has corresponded with Agenda 21. Designing the legislative framework of sustainable development was one of the objectives comprised in that Declaration which resulted in the ***Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia***. The Strategy was adopted in 2009 and it assumed responsibilities arising from The *United Nations Millennium Declaration* and *Millennium Development Goals* adopted on General Assembly of the United Nations in 2000 taking in account some national particularities such are: protected areas and national parks (8,54% of total territory), the Adriatic Sea protection (35,4% of total territory), 1136 endemic species and social factors like negative population growth.

Fundamental legislations in the field of the nature, environmental, air, sea, water, climate and soil protection, waste and energy management, animal protection are:

- *Nature Protection Act, 1994, 2005, 2013;*
- *Strategy and Action Plan for the Protection of Biological and Landscape Diversity of the Republic of Croatia, 1999, 2008;*
- *Strategy and Action Plan on Nature Protection of the Republic of Croatia for period 2017-2025; 201;*
- *Environmental Protection Act, 2013, 2013, 2015;*
- *Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Republic of Croatia, 2009;*
- *Act on Protection against Light Pollution, 2011;*
- *Air Protection Act, 2011, 2014, 2017;*
- *Act on Sustainable Waste Management, 2013, 2017;*
- *Waste Management Strategy of the Republic of Croatia, 2005;*
- *Animal Protection Act, 2006, 2013, 2017.*

Other acts:

- *GMO Act, 2005, 2009;*
- *Water Act, 2009, 2011, 2011, 2013, 2014;*
- *Aquaculture Act, 2018;*
- *Hunting Act, 2005, 2009, 2009, 2016, 2016, 2016, 2017;*
- *Marine Fisheries Act, 2014, 2018;*
- *Act on Renewable Energy Resources and Highly Effective Cogeneration, 2015, 2016, 2017;*
- *Act on Energy Efficiency, 2014;*
- *Act on Forests, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2012, 2013, 2014;*
- *Act on Sustainable Use of Pesticides, 2014;*
- *Act on Fertilizers and Soil Improvers, 2003, 2007, 2013, 2014.*

II.3. Legislative Framework of Poland

Despite the fact that in Poland there has been a growing interest in the issues related to sustainable development, it didn't quickly get one common definition, which could be used in any field of science, but functioned for a long time in a various form in legal, economic and social terminologies. Due to the presence of this concept in various fields of science, at least several dozens of definitions can be found. An important feature of the idea of developing sustainable development is, as the above graphic illustrates, its multi-dimensionality and it is characterized by the common goal - specific social and economic development, leading to the satisfaction of human needs, taking into account environmental determinants. When it comes to Polish legislation, it should be noted that the principle of sustainable development up to the 1990s was foreign to our legal order. In some legal acts, the concept of eco-development began to appear, understood now as the principle of sustainable development. In 1992, the Polish government signed the Rio de Janeiro Declaration on environmental protection. This document contained 27 principles which should guide countries in implementing environmental policy and its development. Another document adopted by Poland was Agenda 21 - an action program focusing on nature conservation, taking into account the role of man in shaping the environment.

One of the first legal acts in which the concept of eco-development appeared was the Act of 7 July 1994 on spatial development, which was replaced by the act of 27 March 2003 on spatial planning and development. The introduction of the principle of sustainable development into the area of national legislation took place through the content of the provision of art. 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, placing the principle of sustainable development in the initial regulations of the Constitution in the chapter entitled "Rzeczpospolita". After this significant change, an amendment to the Act of January 31, 1980 on environmental protection and development was also made. This document currently has no binding force because it has been replaced by the Act of 27 April 2001 on environmental protection. In the act on environmental protection, the concept of sustainable development occurs in many articles. In art. 3 point 50 of the aforementioned Act, one can find a legal definition of the concept of sustainable development. On the basis of this article, sustainable development is one in which there is a process of integrating economic, social and political factors, while maintaining ecological balance in order to be able to meet the most important needs of specific communities and citizens of both present and future generations.

Applying this concept in practice was assumed by the Act of December 6, 2006, which concerned the principles of conducting development policy. The paramount objective of this policy is to conduct such activities that are consistent with the assumptions of sustainable development and its implementation is the responsibility of the public administration bodies, both governmental and local governments. It should be emphasized

that the principle of sustainable development is recognized as a constitutional rule, and consequently, it has the status of the highest law and is superior to other legal acts listed below in Poland, such as acts or ordinances.

The most important legal acts regarding environmental protection in Poland are:

- Act of 27 April 2001. Environmental protection law (Journal of Laws of 2008, No. 25, item 150, as amended);
- Act of 3 October 2008 on access to information about environment and its protection, public participation in environmental protection and on environmental impact assessments (Journal of Laws of 2008, No. 199, item 1227);
- Act of 27 April 2001 on waste, (Journal of Laws of 2007, No. 39, item 251, as amended);
- Regulation of the Minister of Environment of September 27, 2001 regarding the waste catalogue (Journal of Laws of 2001, No. 112, item 1206);
- The Act of 18 July 2001 on Water Law (Journal of Laws of 2005, No. 239, item 2019, as amended);
- The Act of April 16, 2004 on Nature Conservation, (Journal of Laws of 2004, No. 92, item 880, as amended);
- The Act of 13 October 2005 - Hunting Law, (Journal of Laws of 2005, No. 127, item 1066);
- The Act of February 4, 1994 - Geological and Mining Law, (Journal of Laws of 2005, No. 228, item 1947, as amended);
- Act of 13 April 2007 on prevention and repair of damage to the environment (Journal of Laws of 2014, item 1789, as amended);
- Act of 15 July 2011 on the national eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS) (Journal of Laws, item 1060).

Matters related to environmental protection are also regulated by a number of ordinances of the Minister of the Environment or regulations of the Council of Ministers, such as: Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 9 November 2010 on projects that may significantly affect the environment (Journal of Laws of 2016 item 71), or the ordinance of the Minister of the Environment of 17 April 2012 on the detailed scope of information on environmental impact assessments and strategic environmental impact assessments (Journal of Laws, item 529).

II.4. Legislative Framework of Slovenia

Emergence of first natural preservation activities in Slovenia dates back to the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century (Hlad, 2002). Although natural scientists, nature lovers and mountaineers have already been warning against excessive harvesting of plants and threats to certain parts of nature, it was that period when first official protection regulations and circulars were issued by the provincial authorities of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. During the World Wars, nature conservation efforts of individuals brought to life a first social organization for nature protection, *Odsek za varstvo prirode in prirodnih spomenikov pri Muzejskem društvu v Ljubljani* (Department for the Protection of Nature and Natural Monuments at the Museum Society in Ljubljana) in the year of 1919. Their biggest achievement was *Spomenica*, a document proposing the creation of several protected areas for the protection of plant and animal species, along with caves and cave fauna (Peterlin, *Varstvo narave na prelomnici*, 1970). Immediately after the Second World War, the first professional service for the field of nature protection was established, but apart from rare exceptions, the area was still lagging behind other nations of the European continent (although, Slovenia was the fifth European country to declare its first national park in 1924)

(Peterlin, 75 let po Spomenici Odseka za varstvo prirode in prirodnih spomenikov pri Muzejskem društvu za Slovenijo, 1995).

After the war, Great Britain, for instance, declared ten national parks, which to this day form a core of their environmental protection. Slovenia followed their example just in the beginning of the 1980s. With the rise in economic growth in Slovenia, consequently, there were demands for greater spatial interventions, such as hydroelectric constructions or ski centers.

There was a dispute between the few nature conservation specialists against strong politically supported investors, which attracted the attention of the broader public. With its support, nature conservation point of view prevailed in most cases, which paved the way to establishment of first national parks (Triglav National Park, Cerknica Lake, Planinsko Field) and creation of a systematic legislation in regard to nature conservation. Then the Law on Nature Protection (Zakon o varstvu narave, ZVN for short) was passed in 1970. It was a modern law, comparable to similar regulations across Europe. Sadly, it was poorly implemented and soon replaced by a Law on natural and cultural heritage (Zakon o naravni in kulturni dediščini) in 1981. Since natural heritage pertains only to properties, areas or specific parts of nature with cultural, scientific, historical or aesthetic value, this was actually a step back from comprehensive nature conservation presented in ZVN. After a few years of stagnation in this area, a much needed government regulation came about in 1993. Protected species list significantly expanded and encompassed numerous types of birds along with three great beasts of Slovenia: the bear, the wolf and the lynx. The Environmental Protection Act (Zakon o varstvu okolja, ZVO) has established a comprehensive environmental and nature protection system with one of its foundations being that a man too is a part of nature (Environmental Protection Act, Article 4). Comprehensiveness of this system is visible not just by protection of environment from pollution but it also promotion of sustainable use and protection of natural resources. Additionally, it has created a framework for the systematic regulation of nature protection, which was established by the Law on Nature Preservation (Zakon o ohranjanju narave, ZON) in 1999. This is the actual legislation still in place today and is, along with numerous ratified international conventions, a clear sign of Slovenian involvement in international efforts for nature protection.

Nature protection is, just as numerous other social relations, regulated by legal norms covered by the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, the international laws, EU law, and administrative laws on nature protection as well as civil and punitive offense law. Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia dictates that the state has a duty to preserve natural wealth and cultural heritage as well as create opportunities for a compliant civilizational and cultural development of Slovenia. Even though constitution itself does not explicitly pertain to the protection of nature, the latter is still in public interest and the state (with local communities' cooperation) articulates public interest to be regulated in accordance with the law (Law on Nature Preservation, Paragraph 4). To put it simply, protection of natural and cultural wealth in Slovenia is a constitutional duty of all citizens. It should also be mentioned that the Constitution must coincide with international and EU laws and international treaties ratified by the Slovenian parliament. Consequentially, they share the same view on nature protection. Although certain conventions are more general in their nature (Bern, Bonn, Washington, Barcelona or Alpine conventions), the EU still has a quite concrete policy on protection from all kinds of threats to animal and plant kingdom; restricting trafficking, deliberate killing and disturbance of all life, as well as protecting their habitat.

The clearest guidelines however, can be found under The Environmental Protection Act. Environment is precisely defined as that part of the nature, which can be affected by the influence of human activity. Nature is an entirety of the material world and a composition of natural laws of interconnected and interdependent parts and processes. Environmental parts

are soil, mineral resources, air and animal and plant species, including their genetic material (The Environmental Protection Act, Article 5). The law clearly defines fundamental principles and actions on nature protection, information and monitoring, its economic and financial instruments, public services and other aspects, connected to nature preservation. The purpose of environmental protection is promotion and guidance of social development, which provides long-term conditions for human health, the well-being and quality of all life, and the preservation of biodiversity. Among the objectives of environmental protection are preventing and reducing the burden on the environment, maintaining and improving the quality of the environment, sustainable use of natural resources, eliminating the burden on the environment, improving the diseased natural balance and restoring its regeneration capabilities.

It should be noted that there is a special attention in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Slovenia to the protection of nature, namely natural values and biodiversity (flora and fauna) and protection of the environment. Special chapter of the Criminal acts against the environment, space, natural goods, from Article 333 to 347 lists criminal offences against protection of the environment, space and in the context of natural assets objects of nature protection. In addition, Article 223 stipulates that damage to a natural value is a criminal offense. Managing matters on biotic diversity and protection of natural values of national importance falls under state jurisdiction and, on a smaller scale, with local authorities.

III. Ethical aspects of human behaviour

The most distinctive difference between humans and other living organisms is the reason. We normally have the sense of morality and usually know the difference between right and wrong. We don't exactly live our lives by looking for answers in books of laws, we are usually not even aware of them. But we do know when we are doing something wrong because we are taught some common codes of ethical behaviour.

Modern civilization, developed around industrialization, has been founded on the idea that man is the supreme master of nature, from which he has to extract maximum benefits. **Love of nature** must be an essential component of human behaviour. The environment is the totality of external factors in which humans, animals and plants live. Protecting the environment is a problem that must concern not only environmentalist, but also everyone else. Thus, millenniums of harmonious coexistence between man and nature have been forgotten and a new incorrect mentality came to be, where indifference and unconscious aggression towards the environment lead the way.

The new relationship between human beings and the environment is manifested in several ways: in our urban life, but also in the industrial and cultural areas. Man, through his intervention, essentially altered the natural environment, according to his requirements. Through the uninterrupted progress of science and technology, man has manifested his tendency to dominate and exploit nature. The changes these alterations have caused over the last hundreds of centuries far outweigh the natural transformations in millions of years.

“When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world”, said naturalist John Muir. Nature means life, and we must realize that our lives took a turn in the wrong direction, and every second of every day we have to show a positive attitude towards environmental protection and make conscious efforts in helping to reduce pollution. A plastic container thrown to the ground, let alone thousands, can cause unimaginable harm to our natural surroundings; so it would be so easy for each of us to get involved, to help protect and ease the earth from the heavy burden that it has to carry through the negligence and indifference of people. Using less electricity and water would be insignificant for man, but for our planet it would mean an enormous deal. Consuming less meat would mean we could save thousands of hectares of land that should no longer be

grown for animal feed, so the earth would be less polluted with all sorts of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and insecticides.

The world has become truly aware of the pollution phenomenon only in the mid-20th century, when the consequences of urban smog, acid rain, increased greenhouse effect, thinning of the ozone layer, severe deterioration of the quality of water and soil started to be felt. People became victims of their own actions so they have begun to take responsibility for the environment in which they live.

In our daily life, we waste a lot of things such as plastic, paper, etc. We can start to recycle these wastes instead of throwing them in garbage bin. We can categorize them into non-recyclable and recyclable products and throw them in the corresponding waste basket or send recyclable products to a recycling company. We ought not to buy a plastic bag every time we go grocery shopping, instead we should carry a reusable bag and save both money and the environment.

The previously mentioned usage of less electricity is easily doable. We just have to turn off all appliances that we are not using and replace all of the inefficient ones. Another way to save energy is to use fans instead of air conditioning systems which use a great amount of electricity. If we do need to use air conditioners, then we should make sure that we set the temperature to an inconsiderably lower temperature than the outside one and check and make sure all the windows are well-sealed.

Nowadays, a vehicle is becoming a basic requirement for traveling and transportation. In fact, vehicles are one of the main reasons leading to air pollution. One of the best ways to protect the environment is to walk or ride the bike instead of driving the car or motorbike for short trips. It not only helps us reduce air pollution but also helps us get more exercise and enjoy the fresh air. For long trips, using public transportation such as bus or train is another good way to help prevent air pollution, but one of the most important ways to help protect the world we live in is by education. Education plays a crucial role in raising awareness of environmental challenges and shaping the attitudes and behaviours that can make a difference. Recycling and sustainable consumptions should be topics of discussions in classrooms all over the world. Raising awareness and developing eco-aware future generations can only lead to a cleaner and safer environment.

There are a lot of questions...Why do people buy breeder dogs instead of fostering shelter ones? Instead of giving shelter to animals desperate for love and care, we encourage holding animals for breeding. We must be aware that animal breeding has profit for its purpose and in most cases that is before the animals' wellbeing. Respecting the life and its dignity cannot be limited to humans only. **It is a universal value.** Thinking that we owe to respect only peoples' lives lead us to a very obscure path of playing games with this value. It leaves space for distorting its meaning and to apply it differently, according to the moment. We are already doing that with human lives: wars with a lot of civilian victims including children, euthanasia of terminally ill people, abortions of malformed fetuses. We have already come to the stage that we play Gods with human lives, deciding who is worth of living and who is not. What will be next? And it will be next.

When we learn to estimate the life worthiness' of these categories, some others will appear, and we will accept them more easily. In this light **we should reconsider the value of life as we see it today and learn to respect life as the ultimate value.** Buying and eating certain fish like mackerel during the close season or protected and endangered date-shells, we encourage their fishing. If we stop doing that, there would not be a market for such illegal activities. We should warn authorities if we witness such activities. People usually do not react on these things but we should, it IS our responsibility. Turning the blind eye to the actions which we might think are not our responsibility, we are sending the message that we agree with them. Our silence means approving. That way we all become victims of the small

group of abusers who rule our street, school, neighbourhood, town and world. Deciding to protect others, we decide to protect ourselves. Choosing to walk somewhere or ride a bike, you choose to keep you fit and strong, and your environment would be healthier for you and your family. We must promote healthier and more economic lifestyle. The care for environment is not only that, it is a care for yourself. Turning off the lights and water taps makes you more responsible for managing your money and not only environmentally friendly. **We must develop better consciousness about our everyday actions taken for granted.**

To manage your waste efficiently (to recycle) means that less waste would pollute the food you eat. Choose to ignore products in plastic or out of plastic because it is poisonous for all living beings. We must be more responsible towards producing waste, think carefully what we buy and why we buy it. **We must reconsider our role as consumers.** In addition, we have right to know how to manage our waste. Buy seasonal fruits and vegetables at a local market; it is not normal to grow tomatoes in winter, they are artificial and full of pesticides. That way you support local food producers and choose to eat healthy. We must be more aware of what we eat as malnutrition is a trigger for diseases. **We should respect our body more** and not put in it garbage food. **Treat other people with respect:** good relationships, social and communication skills are the basis for your own mental happiness. The way you treat others says a lot about you. If you are full of anger, bitterness and aggression, your whole entity suffers and you end up tired and exhausted. We should remember that all people are equal and you should give them the same chances and opportunities to prove themselves. **We must choose to discourage corruption** whenever you can, and by corruption we mean not only political corruption or bribing, but corruption of words, thoughts and relationships. Once you choose to lose your integrity, to lie or be dishonest, it always leads to more and bigger lies and dishonesties.

The last but not the least, **we must help people in need.** Don't turn your back and pretend they don't exist. Being them responsible or not for their present state, no man can call himself a man if he chooses the sick, old, ill, poor and helpless are not of his concern. **If we are not responsible for other people's lives and well-being, then we fail in humanity.**

IV. Recovering ethical norms in the national framework regarding durable development and environment Protection-Comparative analysis in four countries: Romania, Croatia, Poland and Slovenia

IV.1. Comparative analysis in Romania

The *Environmental Protection Law* declares that the state recognizes the right to a healthy and well balanced environment for any person, guaranteeing to that end that anyone who wishes to have access to environmental quality information should be able to do that. The law proclaims the protection of the environment as an “objective of major public interest”, and as the basis of its regulations it uses “the principles and the strategic elements that lead to a sustainable development of the society”. The framework law then goes on to list the basic principles: the principle of cautiousness in decision making (Article 3 a); the principle of prevention of ecological risks and damage (Article 3 b); the principle of conservation of biodiversity and of specific ecosystems (Article 3 c), and the principle “the polluter pays”.

Risk prevention constitutes the main purpose, the essence of environmental protection. Prevention can be seen from two perspectives: the prevention of production of harmful pollution and limitation or disposal of the damages after the pollution has taken place.

The law goes on to define biodiversity as the diversity of all living organisms that come from aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, as well as the ecological complexes they comprise, and it also encompasses diversity within species. The ecosystem is seen as a dynamic complex of communities of plants, animals and micro-organisms and their living environment all interacting in a functional unit. The biodiversity and ecosystems are specific to a certain natural geographical region and must be preserved by all the available scientific and technical means, including the legal means provided by the norms of this environmental law.

The last principle the law focuses on expresses the idea that the pollutant - the "polluter" - that is, the person causing environmental damage, will be responsible for his actions whether or not his act is punishable or not.

The *Water Law* from 1996 states that water represents a renewable yet vulnerable and limited natural resource, an indispensable element to life and society, a raw material for productive activities, a source of energy and a way of transport, a determinant factor for the preservation of the ecological balance and as such is an integral part of the country's patrimony. Its protection, revaluation and sustainable development of its resources are actions of general interest.

The main purpose of the Water Law is to ensure a continuous conservation, development and protection of all water resources, as well as the ensuring of a free water flow. The Law goes on to add that all waters in the country must be protected against any form of pollution and modification of the characteristics of their resources, of their banks, or basins.

Other principles mentioned are those of conservation and protection of the aquatic ecosystems found in the country's waters and the ensuring of a clean drinking water supply to the population as well as public sanitation.

The *Mountain Law* declares that the Romanian mountain area constitutes an economic, social and environmental territory of special national interest. The main purpose of this law is the conservation of landscapes and biodiversity, as well as development of economic activities specific to this area.

The law proposes the optimal capitalization of agricultural, fish, forest, energetic, industrial, tourism and cultural resources, existing on the territory of a village or town or in a certain mountain area. All this should be done in such a way as to not upset the ecological balance and without degradation of natural environment.

Another objective mentioned in this 2004 law is that of offering stability to the inhabitants already living in the mountain areas but also favouring the settlement of young families there. In order for that to happen and to help the citizens living there the state must improve the services provided for the mountain population by offering them vocational training in such areas as of tourism and agro-tourism.

The Waste Management Law establishes the necessary measures to protect the environment and human health, by preventing or reducing the adverse impacts of the generation and management of waste and by reducing overall impacts of resource use and improving the efficiency of their use. The law follows the waste hierarchy set by the European Union and states that organizing the collection, transport and disposal of municipal waste is one of the obligations of local public administration. It is also mentioned that waste prevention could be achieved by application of "clean technologies" in waste generating activities and it could also be valorised by reuse, material recycling and energy recovery.

IV.2. Comparative analysis in Croatia

Nature Protection Act prescribes preservation of natural balance, harmonization of human activities with natural balance, providing sustainable use of natural resources without

vital damaging of nature. It prescribes that each person's responsibility is to contribute to biodiversity preservation and to use natural resources running the sustainable principle. Nature protection is each person's obligation. However, natural resources can be used for economic or commercial use, even those which may have significant negative influence on nature.

There are usually no public debates (as it is not prescribed) before issuing licences for such activities. Drinking water resources are not protected by law. Protected areas are run by Public Institutions and their Councils, which members are usually chosen from governing political parties which leaves a lot of space for non-ethical decisions.

It is strictly forbidden catching, killing, disturbing and harassing protected species as well as destroying their habitats. It is forbidden possessing, transporting, selling and trading protected species. It is obligatory to report any accidental catching or running over protected species, but there are exceptions to this rule. Also there are exceptions in rules dealing with protected species in cases when it is in the interest of the specie and/or its habitat without clear explanation of what such cases might be.

The law prescribes responsibility for any case of deliberate or accidental ecological damage but the punishment for such acts are fines, and not imprisonment, which assumes less responsibility. It is the duty of the government to promote nature protection through public informing. However, there might be prescribed confidentiality of data concerning the level of nature protection, and that we cannot call the act of public interest. Also there are not prescribed activities concerning education for nature protection (meaning formal or non-formal education).

Animal Protection Act ensures that no animals are bred in a way that can cause pain, suffering or fear. It applies to all vertebrates, but not to fishing. In some cases, it is permitted to use electro shockers and electrical fences to control motion with animals bred for production. It is forbidden to train animals for fighting or to organize animal fighting or dog races. However, this excludes traditional bull competition. It is also forbidden to breed animals for fur production. Animal and pet owners cannot neglect animals or abandon them (it is a felony). It is forbidden to cut ears and tails to animals, or other vulnerable part of the body. This excludes animal testing. However, animal testing is under the supervision of the Ethical Committee. Breeders of animals for production must ensure that the food quality and quantity corresponds to animals' needs but it is not defined by law the kind or quantity of such food, which subsequently can be compromised. All animal breeders must be registered and trained but it is not defined clearly how they should be trained. Animal breeders should not breed animals that are not sexually mature or healthy. All counties must provide at least one animal shelter and it is forbidden to euthanize sheltered animals if not conditioned by an animal's suffering due to illness. Governmental bodies must build public awareness, particularly the young, about animal protection but it is not prescribed how or to what extent.

Act on Sustainable Waste Management predicts measures for reduction of waste production, which, strangely, does not apply to waste waters. Waste producers must pay for their waste management but they pay flat rate, not for the quantity of the waste. Waste must be separated but this still does not apply to households or small businesses. Commercial producers must introduce as much as possible return packaging but it is not prescribed to what extent nor there are measures for encouraging it or penalties if they don't. There is, however, charge for return packaging (for consumers) but only for some glass and plastic bottles, nothing more. Local government are obliged to ensure annual public educational and informative activities about efficient waste management but it is not specified to what extent or whom should they inform or educate.

Act on Energy Efficiency has the purpose of sustainable energy development and production. However, there are few examples of good practices on national level, particularly

those that include sun and wind energy potential, which we have in abundance. The level of informational activities and national awareness campaigns on sustainable energy are insignificant.

Family Act prescribes, among others, the responsibility towards parents and elders on the care to prevent neglect, which is a new addition. It contains measures for prevention of violence, particularly children and women, and in the last years there have been highly visible national campaigns aimed at raising awareness about intolerance towards violence against women. On the other hand, Istanbul Convention has not been ratified yet in Croatia by the Parliament. The reason for that lies in very influential conservative right-wing lobbies, including the Catholic Church, which deny the implementation of gender ideology comprised in the Convention (particularly Article 14).

IV.3. Comparative analysis in Poland

The contemporary branch of normative ethics defines the tendencies and possibilities of making changes in the existing traditional relations between man and nature. At this point, environmental pedagogy plays an important role, which treats nature as a priceless value and disseminates this assumption in the didactic and educational process. In the environmental ethics of the many trends one should distinguish the two: anthropocentrism and biocentrism.

The anthropocentric approach, which is also called homocentric, assumes that man is the main reference point in solving ethical dilemmas, therefore, we only have moral obligations to people. Therefore, nature should be protected only for the man's own sake, which is the moral norm of this direction, and nature is only an instrumental value.

Opponents of this approach believe that this model of thinking has contributed to the ecological crisis in the world. The bio centric model is against the traditional domination of man in nature, justifying that man is not in a privileged position in the biosphere. In this version of environmental ethics, the human species is just one of many elements and the moral norm is the good of the entire biosphere. Supporters of anthropocentrism criticize biocentrism for reducing man to an ordinary element of nature, like other animated creations, and not treating it as a superior value. In response to such accusations, the proponents of biocentrism point out that only man has the ability to distinguish good and evil, which is why he has a great responsibility for deeds, including those caused to nature. After all, people have destroyed much of the natural richness of life and only they can fix it.

An important model of practicing ecological ethics is also the theocentric trend, which requires consideration of all relations between human moral activities and nature, with reference to God as the creator of nature and the cosmos. Following this path of thinking, nature has value for God, who has not only created it, but maintains it in existence, hence the natural environment should be treated in terms of a specific good. Destruction of nature as a result of a consumer lifestyle means, therefore, to defy God and do evil.

After a short description of the most important trends in the eco-ethics, one should consider which of them should be a reference point for political initiatives for introducing sustainable development. As shown by the examples of policies of some rich European countries that protect their own country or individual regions by directing atmospheric pollution or selling radioactive waste to other countries, extreme anthropocentrism cannot be an appropriate ethical model, conducive to the implementation of sustainable development. Such a model, being the result of short-sighted ecological policy, leads to even greater degradation of nature. Moderate anthropocentrism, showing nature protection as an instrumental value, leading to the preservation of human life and health, may also prove to be ineffective, because most people consider as right only what is convenient for them, and this inevitably leads humanity to destruction. The total rejection of anthropocentrism and the

adoption of only a bio centric hierarchy of values, however, can lead to radical solutions that may prove disastrous to humanity. Biocentrism therefore seems to be a trend too far from sustainable development. Summing up, on the basis of sustainable development, attention should be paid to the things that these two different positions combine - the need to protect nature and care for human welfare. Both trends are consistent with the fact that man is responsible for the state of nature, and that only he can fix this unfavorable condition. It seems that the third theocentric trend, the least considered, could overcome the problems and controversies of the two opposing positions, because it emphasizes the uniqueness of man in nature and sees in the beings of nature values in relation to God who gave the earth to man as its administrator.

People must respect nature as a whole, together with all its parts, meaning to feel awe towards its perfection and universality. We should take from nature only what is necessary for mere existence, and, in a perfect world, recover it. If we cut off one tree, we should plant two new ones. We should plan our activities and actions respecting the need for nature preservation. The profit we expect from our businesses should never be more important than the environment. We must build awareness of the importance of biodiversity and be more active in protecting our rights as citizens on healthy environment. We should participate more eagerly in corresponding campaigns because it is our responsibility.

IV.4. Comparative analysis in Slovenia

Third article in the Constitution of Republic of Slovenia states that Slovenia is a state of all its citizens. Concerning conservation of nature that implies that duty for its protection lies not only with the state, but with individual citizens as well. It is therefore a duty of everyone to do their part in this effort, in accordance to the laws, orders, recommendations as well as their morality. It is evident that the state must take the instrumental approach to nature protection; it is after all a legal entity with an obligation to the word of the law. However, there is also the realm of legitimacy, of doing the right thing, which is most often represented by the people, organizations or local authorities. Their micromanagement of the immediate environment often stems from themselves, at the expense of their time or resources, but with potential success of their efforts, also resulting in common wellbeing. It is imperative then, that beneficial actions of individuals and civil initiatives are openly recognized, since they are taking care of an area of intrinsic, where there are no visible advantages, an area where the state with all its other responsibilities strays only rarely. Many of these individuals who share the same views on nature protection are members of different non-governmental organizations. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food there are 236 environmental NGO's in a country with just a little over two million citizens. Their functioning would not be possible without public funds on a national and European level, which is a clear sign of tackling both aspects of nature protection.

There have been two recent cases, where their joint efforts are clearly evident. The United nations have declared May 20th to be the World Honey Bee Day on the initiative of the Beekeepers Association of Slovenia. Hopefully this is another step in recognizing the importance of bees. There is a quote, commonly attributed to either Einstein, Darwin or Maeterlinck as...If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years to liv... (Bonnie Taylor-Blake, Ray Girvan, 2017). Another recent case is the governments' uncharacteristically progressive change of the Constitution, with newly added article 70, stating that everybody has the right to drinking water as well as water sources not being market goods. How well this change is actually implemented is still a matter of debate, since more than half best water sources are privately owned through concessions by foreign conglomerates (Mekina, 2015).

Natural sources and private ownership along with their judicial predispositions are delicate subjects, latter perhaps keeping better pace with the march of progress than the former. Slovenia, being a member of the European Union, would be directly impacted by two controversial trade agreements in 2016, TTIP and CETA. While their contents were being kept from the eyes of the public (and even those who were voting on it), certain details were leaked.

The biggest controversy was “investor protection” clause, allowing corporations to sue governments for taking action to harm their business (Harten, 2016). For instance, should a corporation feel states’ policy on environment protection is holding them at an unfair disadvantage they could be liable in court. While the first round of negotiations was unsuccessful, modified version of CETA is now temporarily valid since 2017. This could be a variation on shallow environmental movement when referring to positive aspects of trade deals: CETA agreement does not provide for significant convergence in the area of product regulation (technical, sanitary, product safety standards) between the EU and Canada. Consequently, the effects of a reduction or abolition of customs duties between the EU and Canada in trade in goods are simulated only (Jože P. Damijan, Črt Kostevc, 2015).

A phrase “Human Alienation” was introduced in the middle of the previous century. Industrial, or modern, era resulted in submission of nature to man and first clear signs of excessive use of nature. Current, postindustrial, or postmodern, era is characterized by dispersion of dualisms (man versus nature) and origins of egocentrism (Oršanič, 2013). Firstly, man is a product of nature; a man has come out of nature. Secondly, it has and still does depend on nature and its functioning, and thirdly, the state of nature is increasingly dependent on man (Schedl, 1997). Humanity is recognizing its place and its co-dependence with nature. While alienation is most commonly addressed in a sociological context, the topic here is nature and ecology. In this regard, alienation in Slovenia is really not that much of a problem. Granted, its citizens are a part of postmodern society that is largely part based on technology, there is however, still a cultural background of “escape into nature”. The reasons for it are a rather recent rise to tertiary and quaternary sectors of the economy, where non-urban and rural way of living is still not quite a thing of the past (in 2005, 51% of all inhabitants lived in urban areas, which is much less than Europe’s average of 72%) (SOER, 2018); as means of escape from the postmodern society or a temporal “change of scenery”; and last but not least, simply because Slovenia’s diverse and pristine nature offer innumerable way and opportunities for leisure time.

While alienation from nature does not seem to be much of a problem in Slovenia, sustainable development however, and especially climate change very well could be. There has been a recognized great potential for sustainable development, which can be used for a new development momentum by the strengthening of environmental, social and economic capital, moreover; in political rhetoric it is even considered the only way to go. The Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning is preparing a framework program for the transition to the green economy based on wealth of natural sources and high level of education and training of people.

An article Sustainable development is right up Slovenia’s street (Trajnostni razvoj je Sloveniji pisan na na kožo) on Delo newspaper’ is carefully optimistic: it labels capitalism as an obsolete system and politics being unable to follow the alternative. While there are other available options, they are not taught at the universities. Again, it stresses Slovenia’s position as a biodiversity hotspot of Europe with quite the opposite problems as the rest of the world, which struggles with the loss biotic diversity over climate change. Economic development should turn from ever-increasing use of raw materials, energy and building up space, especially with Slovenia being among twenty most privileged countries in the world in terms of natural capital, mostly due to water, forests, geographic diversity and possibility of using

wide range of renewable sources. Self-sufficiency could be maintained by cleaning 10 percent of overgrown agricultural land, along with better development strategies (Tavčar, 2015).

Even though NGO's published a vision of sustainable development of Slovenia and additional three years since the article was published, first signs of any major progress still remain to be seen. While Slovenia currently lacks an overarching climate strategy, the government has engaged in numerous policy areas with the goal of reducing the country's climate impact. Slovenia's emission pattern is markedly different from those of other Central and Eastern European EU Member States, in that it was the only one who had to make specific efforts to reach its Kyoto target. Slovenia's mitigation efforts have focused particularly on renewable energy development and energy efficient buildings and appliances, though recently the transport sector has begun to receive more attention from policymakers (Lena Donat, Andrew Eberle, Eike Karola Velten, Matthias Duwe, 2014).

Climate change is not yet problematic in as a clearly visible impact on environment in Slovenia (this of course does not mean it is not affected by it), but rather as an attitude of passiveness and inability. It is difficult, of course, to lead a green policy when national deficit towers over the distribution of profits and green energy might not be as green as it seems at a first glance. Slovenia is nevertheless trying to walk abreast with countries with ever-higher percentages of renewable energy sources, with 22% of its energetic needs coming from RSE and striving to reach 25% by the 2020 (Inštitut Jožef Štefan, Statistični urad, 2015). Slovenia's diverse countryside provides opportunities to harvest water energy, but on the other hand, hinders the use of wind power with its specific requirements. Solar power is on the rise, helped by the government grants, but it will pose another problem in the future, with the disposal of worn out solar panels. There was quite an outcry among the Slovenian public, with the construction of another block to Šoštanj thermal power plant. While the project turned out to cost far more than anticipated, people were collectively against building another power plant running on coal. The most energy in Slovenia is generated by thermal power – 36%; followed by nuclear power 35%, hydroelectric power with 27% and lastly, a mere 1% by solar power. Overall, Slovenia still has a long way to go in its transfer to greener energy and taking its part against climate change.

The most noticeable and constant change has in last 40 years has been a rise of average temperature by 1,7°C. While precipitation, evaporation and solar radiation have been fluctuating, they have not been significantly deviating from the measurements taken in the past.

V. Conclusions

In the past, the reasons for the protection of plant and animal species have often been expressed as anthropocentric; species were protected in particular because of their direct utility. In the new nature protection systems, they have been upgraded with the awareness that each species with its unique and unrepeatable genetic fund, which has been shaped through millennia, is a unique and unrepeatable value and has the right to be conserved as a value in itself. Finally, it began as a reason for the protection of animals, and to a lesser extent plants, taking into account the awareness that the creatures of other species have equal rights to life and survival (Ferry, 1998). A man has a moral responsibility of respecting this right. In addition to the general protection of plant and animal species, which presupposes the basic standard of society's relation to plants and animals, meaning banning of extermination, threats or deliberate destruction without justifiable reasons, there is also a particular protection of plant and animal species. This protects mainly endangered and internationally protected species in order to maintain, improve or at least not worsen their status. These are defined by the IUCN Red Lists of Threatened Species. They are based on a unified method

for determining the degree of threat to species. Red lists have been passed in 2002, but their beginnings go back the 1960s, being founded on works by an English scientist Peter Scott (The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2014).

While these two types of protection seem nominally separate, they are in fact, two sides of the same coin. There is a distinction between instrumental value and intrinsic value. The former is the value as means to further some ends, whereas the latter is the value of things as ends in themselves regardless of whether they are also useful as mean to other ends (Jamieson, 2002). For example, a plant may have instrumental value in its healing properties. However, if the plant also has some value in itself, independently of its prospects for furthering some other ends such as human health, or the pleasure from aesthetic experience, then the plant also has intrinsic value. Because the intrinsically valuable is that which is good as an end in itself, it is commonly agreed that something's possession of intrinsic value generates direct moral duty on the part of moral agents to protect it or at least refrain from damaging it (O'Neill, 1992).

While the issue of nature preservation is presented clearly and vocally in the public, people are still not treating it as an actual threat. The reason for that might be human indifference to events that are yet come to pass, disconnection or even unawareness of the problem, or even as a failure of environmentalist movement in relaying their message. Whatever the reason, humanity's efforts so far have not been sufficient, as it is clearly shown by the disappearance of marine life, rising water levels, lack of drinking water, destruction of biological habitats, extinction of animal species, extensive coral bleaching, not to mention the rise in global temperatures. Nature exploitation continues to happen in spite of overwhelming destruction; therefore, it must have its reasons. These reasons are at the moment they prevailing over nature preservation efforts, which is why they must be identified in order to determine next course of action taken by the nature conservationist and general public alike. There is a gap between the ecology and the industry and each side continues to follow their doctrine, with no hope of reconciling their separate objectives. Perhaps the time has come for the both of them to step out of their trenches and start cooperating. Ecological agenda of protection as well as constant industrial progress might very well be impossible to implement with nothing left to protect or no one left to make progress.

Although the national legislative framework on nature protection is very detailed and comprises all important European Directives, as well as ratified global Conventions, the actual implementation of Agenda 21 is very slow and we lag behind other EU members. Public interest in decisions regarding using natural resources is not a national priority. The level of public informing on these questions is poor, and the citizens and communities are kept aside. If not for some ecological groups, some controversial decisions about natural resources would have passed without people even knowing about them.

Although the Animal Protection Act is a progressive one, there are still some issues that are not perfect for animals, like those concerning breeding animals for production. It is widely known that such animals are fed mostly on artificial nutriments, given steroids, antibiotics and other substances to improve lactation and grow them bigger. This issue is important also because food produced this way can have negative impact on consumers' health. Consumers are usually not aware of what they eat, and they believe the producers, but they should know exactly where their food comes from. Consumers rights are still in the background, not taken seriously by consumers, or producers, or the Government.

The next problem is still existing corruption with judicial power leading. If we want laws to be respected we must ensure their implementation, particularly in the fields of illegal, harmful and corrupted activities. Without this there cannot be improvement in raising individual or collective responsibility. Corrupted behaviour of any kind is deeply

incorporated in the mind-set. Values like integrity, honesty and trustworthiness are rarely discussed or formally taught, and **should be!**

Traditional values like traditional families and morality have been compromised with the rise of economic independence. Sexual liberties, common-law marriages, same-sex marriages are some of the categories which were condemning and contemptible here some 20 years ago. Conservative groups are on their knees. Denying the ratification of the Istanbul Convention is their last desperate attempt to recover the dignity of Life that once existed. Although their insurances interfere with some basic human rights, still, it is quite disturbing that the illusory freedom enabled by the democracy, leads to more moral decadency.

To sum up, the key problems would be the lack of formal education, non-transparency, slow implementation of sustainable development strategies and traditional values. There's a lack of strategic educational and informational activities concerning sustainable development. On formal level, there is still not a viable strategy of education on nature protection and sustainable development at schools. Education for sustainable development should start as early as pre-school, and should be obligatory. There is a prescribed school curriculum of the so-called Citizenship Education as a cross curricular subject but its implementation is poor and not evaluated. To raise responsible citizens, it is necessary to start from here. Today's students are future citizens and, hopefully, local, national or world leaders. If we want them to be responsible and make ethical decisions, we must educate them now for that...

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