

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES IN THE FIELD OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

REVIEW ARTICLE

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Summary: In 1996, the International Organization for Standardization came out with the ISO 14000 series of standards, as a response to environmental problems, as well as concern for environmental protection. This series of standards helps business systems to align their operations with the environment in mind. The current version of the ISO 14001 standard was published in 2015. The Institute has published a large number of specific standards in the field of environmental protection that promote the environment, i.e. its segments: land, water, sea and coastal area, air, nature, forests, and the Institute's Technical Committee ISME/TK 10: Environment and environmental protection management systems (founded in 2012), is responsible for standards related to these areas. This paper provides explanations for the basic, frequently used ecological and biological terms, as well as eco-terms, which directly relate to the issue of preserving the working and living environment in the postmodern environment using standards. The application of standards ensures better efficiency in the entire production, improves the quality of services and contributes to meeting the highest level of expectations of clients and consumers.

Key words: institutional capacities, natural resources, environment, legislation, standardization, quality system, sustainable development, EU

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INTRODUCTION

A standard is a document established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, providing rules, guidelines, or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at achieving an optimal level of order in a given context.

Standards are widely accepted rules and provisions. They may encompass comprehensive technical specifications (characteristics and requirements for products), procedures for product development, testing, and conformity assessment methods.

The application of standards ensures better efficiency in overall production, improves service quality, and contributes to meeting the highest expectations of clients and consumers. To increase society's trust in standards, it is important to ensure broad participation of interested groups in the development and discussion of standards.

Standards are developed, revised, supplemented, modified, or withdrawn depending on innovations in the development of science and technology. Standards serve as a means of information and a basis for facilitating global trade and enabling communication among partners.

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) introduced the series of standards ISO 14000 in 1996 in response to environmental issues and concerns about environmental protection. This series of standards helps business systems align their operations while considering the environment. The current version of the ISO 14001 standard is published in 2015 (Nešković, 2009).

The Institute for Standardization of Montenegro (ISME) has published a large number of specific standards in the field of environmental protection that promote the environment and its segments: land, water, seas and coastal areas, air, nature, forests, and the Technical Committee of the Institute ISME/TC 10: Environment and Environmental Protection Management Systems (established in 2012) is responsible for standards related to these areas.

It should be emphasized that standardization through standards supports all three dimensions of sustainable development - social, economic,

and environmental, and standards are the support for achieving UN goals.

The Institute ISME has invited all stakeholders to use the services of the ISME Web site to have access to the information they need on standards and related documents at any time.

Standards are developed and published in accordance with the principles and rules established by international and European standardization organizations. The development of European standards is guided by the principles of consensus, openness, transparency, national commitment, and technical coherence and follows several steps (Rakić, 2023).

1. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES IN ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY SYSTEMS

Since 2002 and the first Environmental Performance Review (EPR), the institutional framework in the field of environmental protection has significantly changed in the Republic of Serbia. These changes indicate the efforts that the state invests in creating institutions capable of implementing obligations arising from international, national, and EU obligations. After the dissolution of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, the Republic of Serbia established an institutional structure covering all levels of public administration, including bodies for monitoring and research. However, the institutional framework in the field of environmental protection is still not complete, as can be seen in this work.

The National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD) is established in 2003 to create a forum for discussion and consensus building between ministries and other stakeholders on issues related to environmental protection and sustainable development. The aim of this Council also includes ensuring horizontal coordination between the relevant Ministry of Environmental Protection and other government agencies and addressing potential conflicts in the formulation and implementation of program policies. The Council is also responsible for coordinating the preparation of the National Strategy on Sustainable Development (NSSD). The NCSD council does not have a permanent secretariat.

Since 2002, Serbia has made significant progress in drafting environmental legislation. As recommended by the first Environmental Performance Review, a new legal framework was created with the aim of protecting the environment. In 2004, the following laws were adopted: the Environmental Protection Act (EPA); the Environmental Impact Assessment Act (EIAA); the Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment Act (SEIAA); and the Integrated Prevention and Control of Pollution Act (IPCPA). All of these laws approximate the relevant EU directives and introduce the principles of these directives into national legislation. They also take into account the provisions of the ESPOO Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, as well as its Protocol on Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment.

The environmental liability of polluters for damage to the environment is regulated by the Environmental Protection Act (EPA), and in a general sense, by the Law on Obligations. The principle of polluter pays and the liability of legal successors are also defined in the Environmental Protection Act. Any legal or natural person who causes harm to the environment by unlawful or improper actions is liable for such harm, including liquidation or bankruptcy for legal entities.

Standardization is the activity of establishing provisions for general and repeated use, in relation to real or potential problems, to achieve an optimal level of organization in a specific area.

A standard is a document established by consensus and adopted by a recognized body, which sets forth rules, guidelines, or characteristics for activities or their results to achieve an optimal level of organization in a specific area. A standard may also contain or exclusively relate to terminology, symbols, requirements related to packaging, labeling, or marking if applicable to a product, production method, or process.

An international standard is a standard adopted by international standardization organizations (international bodies) and is publicly available.

A European standard is a standard adopted by European standardization organizations and is publicly available. A Serbian standard is a standard adopted by the Institute for Standardization of Serbia and is pub-

licly available. A related document in the field of standardization (related document) is a document adopted by a standardization organization and is publicly available but does not meet the requirements to be adopted as a standard.

The adoption of a standard or related document is a set of coordinated activities that begin with the adoption of a proposal for the adoption of a standard or related document and end with the adoption of an act proclaiming it. A stakeholder is a business company, other legal entity, entrepreneur, and other natural person interested in standardization.

Serbia has established an institutional structure covering all levels of public administration, including bodies for monitoring and research. However, the institutional framework in the field of environmental protection is still not complete.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection was established in 2003. Responsibilities in the field of water protection were divided between the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Management.

The institutional framework was amended in 2004, with key responsibilities divided between two ministries: the Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Management.

In 2006, a new Constitution was adopted, proclaiming the right of every citizen to a healthy environment and the right to accurate and timely information on the state of the environment. Every citizen is responsible for environmental protection and is obliged to preserve and improve it, as well as protect natural rarities and scientific, cultural, and historical heritage and goods of public interest. A new government was appointed in 2007, based on the former Environmental Protection Administration of the Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection, and the Ministry of Environmental Protection was established.

Until May 2007, a whole range of responsibilities identified by the Law on Ministries was entrusted to the Environmental Protection Administration. The main tasks of the Environmental Protection Administration

include ensuring environmental protection systems and sustainable use of natural resources (air, land, minerals, fish, flora, and fauna), as well as preserving nature and identifying and implementing measures for the protection of nationally significant natural areas. The new Ministry of Environmental Protection inherited the same tasks.

The main tasks of the Ministry of Environmental Protection include ensuring environmental protection systems and sustainable use of natural resources (air, land, minerals, fish, flora, and fauna), as well as preserving nature and identifying and implementing measures for the protection of nationally significant natural areas. The Ministry of Environmental Protection has the following responsibilities:

- Preparation of strategic documents, plans, and programs;
- Assessment of groundwater reserves and preparation of standards for geological maps;
- Protection from ionizing and non-ionizing radiation, chemicals, waste, and hazardous substances in production, transportation, storage, and disposal;
- Cross-border air and water pollution;
- Control of cross-border movement of waste and protected plant and animal species;
- Climate change and ozone layer;
- Environmental protection measures in spatial planning and construction;
- Early warning system for accidents;
- International cooperation in environmental protection and nature conservation;
- Protection from noise and vibration;
- Preparation of geological research for sustainable use of natural resources and groundwater;
- Preparation of geological research for sustainable use of natural resources and groundwater;
- Nature conservation and identification of potential natural areas of conservation significance;

- Issuance of permits for import, export, and transit of waste and sensitive plant and animal species, substances damaging the ozone layer, chemicals, and radioactive materials;
- Inspection supervision in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development.

This Ministry also has some responsibilities in natural resource management. The following institutions are responsible for carrying out tasks in specific areas:

- Forestry Administration;
- Institute for Plant Protection and
- Water Directorate.

The Forestry Administration is responsible for program policies regarding the development and utilization of forests and wildlife, as well as for implementing measures for forest and wildlife protection, seed control, and afforestation.

There are two public forestry enterprises: "JP Srbijašume" and "JP Vojvodinašume". They are responsible for improving and utilizing state-owned forests (timber, recreation), maintaining forest assets, and preparing programs and projects for forest management. The Plant Protection Institute is responsible for controlling the production, import, trade, storage, and use of plant protection products.

This directorate is responsible for developing program policies for water management, rational use of water resources, drinking water supply (excluding distribution), flood protection, issuing permits for water abstraction and discharge, and collecting fees for water use and discharge into water bodies. The Directorate is also responsible for environmental protection and rational water use, monitoring and maintenance of national and transboundary watercourses, and other tasks defined by the Water Law. The public enterprise for water management "Srbijavode" was established to manage water resources in central Serbia, including water abstraction facilities and water supply facilities, while the public enterprise for water resource management "Vode Vojvodine" was established for the same tasks in the AP Vojvodina region.

These include:

- Ministry of Economy, including industry;
- Ministry of Health, including the enforcement of sanitary regulations related to environmental protection;
- Ministry of Capital Investments, including urban planning and construction and permits for road, air, rail, and water traffic; and
- Ministry of Energy and Mining, including energy efficiency, permits for mineral resource extraction (excluding groundwater), and renewable energy sources.

2. LEGISLATION IN THE LEGISLATION OF THE EU AND SERBIA IN THE ECO-AREA

The distribution of responsibilities in the field of environmental protection among these institutions has many shortcomings, overlaps, and gaps. Cooperation between ministries is defined only by certain provisions. The Ministry of Environmental Protection has limited influence on other national program policies. While its capacity for drafting laws is strong, its capacity for formulating and assessing program policies, economic assessment, and implementing strategic impact assessment and integrated pollution prevention and control is limited. These issues pose obstacles to a comprehensive response to environmental protection challenges in Serbia or to challenges in aligning with the EU *acquis* in the field of environmental protection.

This Council was established in 2003 to create a forum for discussion and consensus building among ministries and other stakeholders on environmental protection and sustainable development issues. In addition to these activities, the Council also includes ensuring horizontal coordination between the Ministry of Environmental Protection and other government agencies, as well as assisting in the formulation and implementation of program policies. The Council is also responsible for coordinating the preparation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD).

Main institutional weaknesses in the field of environmental protection:

- Lack of horizontal coordination between the Ministry of Capital Investments, National Agency for Spatial Planning, and Ministry of Science and Environmental Protection;
- Lack of consistent integration of environmental protection issues and requirements in the same area in the process of adopting spatial and urban plans and issuing building permits;
- Overlaps in responsibilities between the water directorate and the Ministry of Environmental Protection in the area of water quality and pollution;
- Potential conflicts of jurisdiction between the Forestry Administration, which carries out forestry activities as an economic activity, and the Environmental Protection Administration, which is responsible for protecting forest ecosystems;
- Unclear responsibilities for the protection of wildlife in the context of hunting;
- Inadequate and unclear division of responsibilities between the Ministry of Energy and Mining and the Environmental Protection Administration in the field of geological research;
- Insufficient institutional coordination and coverage of monitoring activities in the field of environmental protection;
- Inadequate and unskilled personnel at all levels of public administration, including the environmental protection inspection service, especially for strategic environmental impact assessment, integrated pollution prevention and control, monitoring, and inspection activities;
- Educational institutions are not adequately prepared to train a sufficient number of experts in the field of environmental protection.

According to existing laws, a certain number of environmental protection responsibilities have been decentralized to the provincial level or local self-government units.

In accordance with the Law on the Competences of AP Vojvodina from 2002, certain environmental protection competences have been

transferred to Vojvodina. The competences of the Provincial Secretariat for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development include:

- Development of environmental protection and sustainable development programs for Vojvodina;
- Measures for their implementation;
- Monitoring and information systems;
- Approval of environmental impact assessments;
- Approval of environmental protection programs, including protection of agricultural land, flora and fauna, forests, and water;
- Approval of construction programs;
- Approval of plans related to national parks within its territory;
- Inspection supervision for all environmental media except for hazardous substances and biodiversity;
- All other issues of importance to the province, in accordance with the law;
- The Province is also responsible for strategic assessment of plans and programs and issuing integrated permits for facilities and activities within its territory.

Institutional competences in the field of environmental protection in AP Vojvodina are not always entirely clear. The government delegates to AP Vojvodina competences related to environmental impact assessment, inspection supervision, and monitoring. However, the extent to which other competences are delegated to AP Vojvodina is not clearly defined.

Municipalities have the following competencies:

- in the field of urban planning;
- in the field of environmental protection and improvement of the environment;
- well as in communal affairs.

At the local level, secretariats for environmental protection have competencies related to environmental protection, including air quality protection, noise protection, municipal waste management, urban planning, and issuing building permits for facilities not included at the na-

tional level. Strategic assessment of plans and programs, environmental impact assessment, and integrated permits are also among their statutory tasks.

The concept of alignment basically means the concept of the so-called "harmonization" of the national regulations of the member states with the *acquis communautaire*. Different terms are used in the Founding Agreement for this process, such as: English: harmonization, approximation, coordination, German: *angleichung*. These three variants in the English language were supposed to reflect the different degrees of intensity of the integration processes that they create between the member states. Thus, the provisions of the articles of the Treaty on the Establishment of the European Community provide for the harmonization of legal, sub-laws and administrative measures in which it is necessary for the establishment or functioning of the common market.

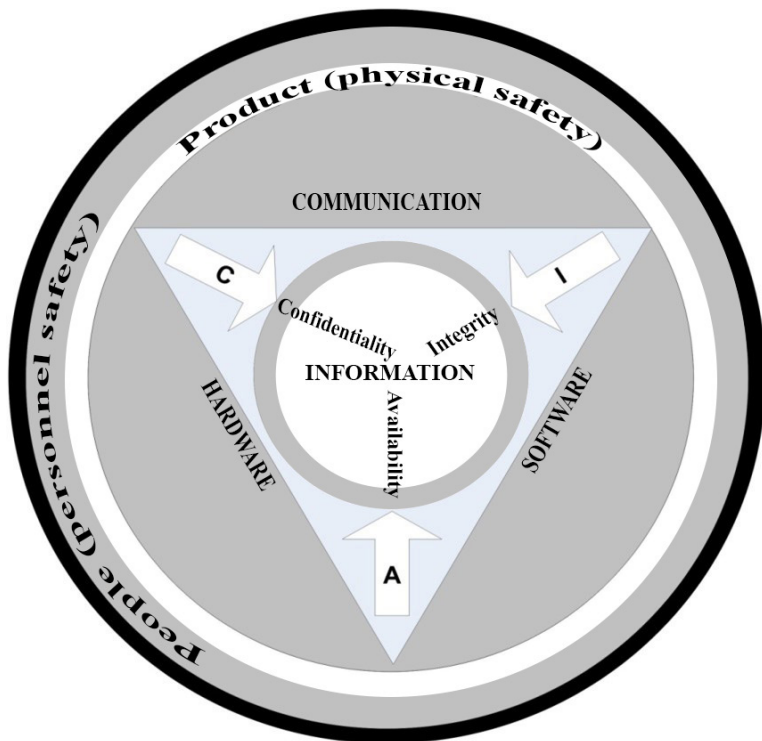


Figure 1. Security Provisions in Environmental Protection Standardization

The approximation of customs regulations was envisaged by the provisions of the former member of the Treaty establishing the European Community, as well as "harmonization or coordination" of sales taxes and state aids by the provisions of the Treaty establishing the EC members. Some regulations also envisage "harmonization and approximation", such as regulations on social systems (Article 136), while "coordination" of legislative, sub-legislative, and administrative provisions is provided for in the areas of settlement law and recognition of professional qualifications and monetary changes.

Harmonizing domestic legislation with EU law (*acquis communautaire*) is a strategic state goal that requires engagement of all social factors, including scientific institutions professionally involved in studying union law. By organizing this event, our aim was to provide the general public and all significant political stakeholders at home and abroad with insights into the Institute's rich multi-year scientific, research, and publishing activities. For over six decades, the Institute for International Politics and Economics has been engaged in scientifically studying processes and phenomena in the field of international politics and economics, as well as legal aspects of international relations relevant to the country's position and foreign policy.

Transposing European legislation in the field of the environment and climate change brings significant challenges. This will be addressed by the economy, local governments, public enterprises, as well as citizens themselves. Financial, economic, and social analyses are awaiting us regarding the necessary measures and investments in large wastewater treatment systems, collection and treatment of municipal and industrial waste, waste-to-energy systems, physico-chemical treatment of hazardous waste.

One of the most demanding directives in terms of investment is the Industrial Emissions Directive. A total of 227 plants are subject to it and they are obliged to obtain the so-called integrated permit *dozvolu* (Dimitrijević & Miljuš, 2010).

These are plants from the energy sector, metal processing, mineral industry, chemical industry, paper, and food industry - it is estimated that 30% of these plants will require transitional periods for the implemen-

tation of measures, and the total investments for these plants alone are estimated at 1.3 billion EUR. It is important to note that this is just one of dozens of EU directives from Chapter 27 that must be transposed and implemented in our legislation and business practice.

From the perspective of implementation, the greatest challenges await us in the water sector - wastewater, drinking water, municipal infrastructure. This is followed by industrial pollution (IPPC plants), waste, and air protection in energy-intensive industries.

Today, the world and Europe are moving towards minimizing coal consumption and transitioning to alternative energy sources, as well as maximizing energy efficiency, implementing measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, applying the circular economy model, and "green" tools for sustainable business. Applying standards as a voluntary tool in business is one of the best ways for companies to address environmental protection and improvement challenges imposed by international rules, laws, markets, partners, and tenders (Todić, 2010).

Concern for the environment in the textile industry, not only to stop the detrimental effects of excessive waste but also could bring profit to companies. The Chamber of Commerce of Serbia (PKS) has formulated a Memorandum on the implementation of a new business model in the textile industry, which interested parties are signing these days (Tolmač et al., 2016).

The textile industry is a trillion-dollar business globally, and managing textile waste generates profits for companies, financial support for the civil sector and social enterprises, provides green local jobs - emphasizes Siniša Mitrović, Director of the Circular Economy Center. The process is inclusive, sustainable, and beneficial to the environment as it reduces the amount of discarded clothing and fabric in landfills. There is an evident increase in textile waste generation not only in textile production but also in the footwear and leather industry; 60% more is purchased than before, the fashion industry dictates trends, the lifespan of "worn" clothing in closets is reduced, the use of cheap clothing increases, all of which take on the contours of an environmental and social disaster. The circular economy offers solutions that allow the fashion industry to meet the environmental challenge through creativity, design, and user welfare (Prvulović et al., 2016).

Signatories accept a package of circular economy measures, with a high level of responsibility towards environmental protection and conservation of natural resources. They accept, approve, and assist in the implementation of measures to introduce a new business model for waste management from the textile, leather, footwear, and trade industries in Serbia. Signatories of the memorandum establish a National platform for waste management from the textile, leather, and footwear industries and trade.

A particular problem in Serbia is the recycling of construction materials. Waste from demolition and construction is one of the largest and most challenging waste streams.

Mostly, asbestos is found in the composition of demolition and construction waste, as a hazardous waste that was one of the most popular materials in the past century. Because of this legacy, asbestos poses a significant danger in Serbia, but due to a lack of education and the black market, there are no precise data on endangered areas and the scale of the problem.

The problem is that there is no market in Serbia for the reuse of aggregates obtained from demolition and construction waste, which can be used for road construction and other construction projects. There is an excessive number of permits issued at all levels, indicating the need for a revision of this system. A major problem for law enforcement is the lack of infrastructure and capacity for the disposal or storage of hazardous waste.

It is necessary to develop a National Plan for Construction and Demolition Waste, through which the procedures for handling waste containing asbestos from its generation to final disposal will be clearly defined. Establishing a National Registry where all locations in Serbia containing asbestos will be precisely determined is also needed. Revision of issued permits and tightening of criteria regarding technical and other conditions for obtaining a permit to manage this type of waste are necessary to ensure that only operators complying with all legal regulations and technical standards can enter the market. Before demolition begins, materials should be tested in one of the accredited laboratories. After receiving the test report, a company with a valid permit for managing this type of waste should be engaged.

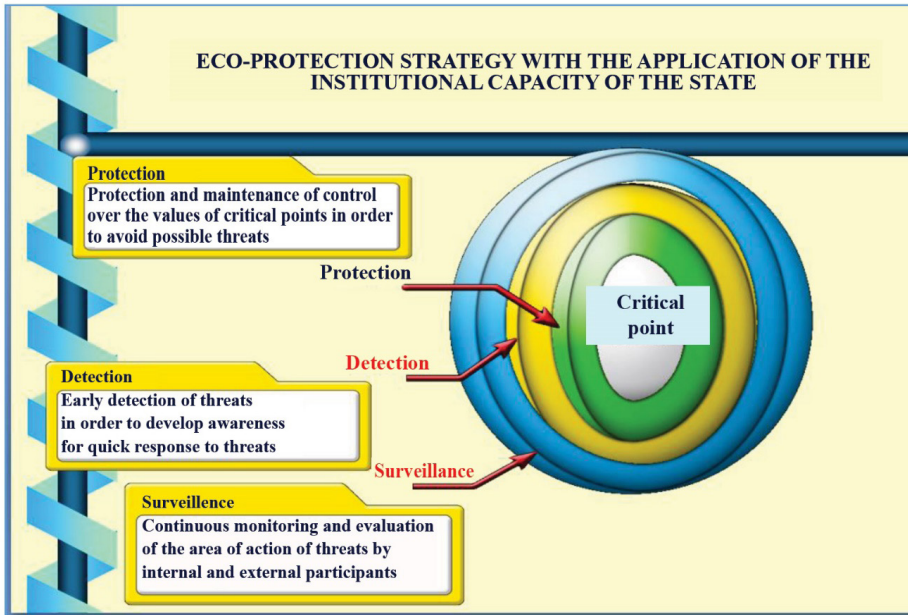


Figure 2. Organizational Content and Measures of Eco-Security

Serbia's integration into the European Union is taking concrete forms. At the end of October 2010, the 27 foreign ministers of the EU gave the green light for the European Commission to provide an opinion on the conditions under which Serbia could join the EU. All this could serve as confirmation to the current Government in Belgrade to continue intensively with its efforts towards reform, especially since the President of the country submitted an official request for Serbia's EU membership candidacy in December 2009. In light of the encouraging sign from the EU – regarding visa regime abolition – also in December 2009, there should be no significant obstacles to finalizing the ratification of the Stabilization and Association Agreement, signed back in 2008.

The overview of the state of the environment, along with the amendments proposed by the expert group, was then submitted on May 29, 2007 to the UNECE Commission for Program Policy in the Field of Environmental Protection, which conducted an independent expert review at its fourteenth session. Representatives of Serbia also participated in

the independent assessment process by experts. The Commission adopted the recommendations given in this review. With the support of the UNDP Country Office in Belgrade, the review will be translated into Serbian. The UNECE Commission on Environmental Policy thanks the Government of Serbia and its experts who worked with international experts and contributed their knowledge and assistance. UNECE expresses the hope that the Government of Serbia will continue to succeed in fulfilling its tasks, including meeting environmental protection goals, including the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of this review.

In EU Constitutional Law and therefore in the Republic of Serbia, a distinction is made between direct applicability and direct effect. Direct applicability means recognizing Community regulations as integral parts of the internal law of Member States as they are, without any transformation or implementation. Direct effect refers to the ability or capacity of individual provisions of Community regulations to create subjective rights and obligations for Community subjects (material aspect), without any additional measures by national authorities to which national courts of Member States must provide immediate protection (processes aspect).

3. THE NATIONAL COUNCIL AND THE IMPORTANCE OF STANDARDIZATION

This distinction results in some sources of Community law being considered directly applicable but not being granted blanket direct effect. The Court of Justice decides on direct effect based on how the specific provision is formulated (as completely precise or perfect) and based on its content (whether it grants a subjective right or imposes an obligation). In this sense, direct effect precedes the recognition of direct applicability, but direct applicability is not sufficient, only a necessary (prior) characteristic of a provision suitable for direct effect.

Involvement in standardization largely involves participation in the work of Institute's expert bodies. The work of expert bodies is work on standards, which is the basis of standardization. To participate in the work of expert bodies (technical committees), it is necessary to fill out an Application for participation in the work of a technical committee, which is

signed and certified before being submitted to the Institute. Participation in the work of the Institute's expert bodies is voluntary.

Consensus is a general agreement on any significant issue reached by considering the views of all interested parties and reconciling all opposing views, with consensus not implying unanimity;

Compliance assessment with prescribed requirements is any activity that indirectly or directly determines whether certain requirements are met;

A mark of conformity is a sign or mark that is placed on a product in accordance with the rules and that any interested party can submit a proposal for new work that meets the needs of the market in a certain area.

When the appropriate Technical Committee accepts a project for the development of an EN standard, member states should suspend all national activities within the project. This means they do not initiate new projects or revise existing standards at the national level. This obligation is called "standstill" and allows efforts to be directed towards the development of EN standards (Roberts et al., 2015).

European standards are developed by appointed experts from specific technical bodies (technical committees) - working groups. When a draft EN is prepared, it is subject to public comment and voting, a process known as "public inquiry". During this phase, all interested parties (e.g., manufacturers, public authorities, consumers, etc.) can comment on the draft. These views are collected by members who then submit the national position for subsequent analysis by the CEN Technical Body. If the results of the public inquiry show approval for the EN standard, the technical body (committee) may decide to publish the standard (Adamo-vić, Josimović, & Josimović, 2019).

If the results of the public inquiry indicate that the draft EN standard requires technical refinement, the technical body (committee) may decide to update the draft and submit it for a second vote, called formal voting. After approval, the EN standard is published. The published EN standard must be given national standard status in all member countries, which are also obliged to withdraw all national standards that are inconsistent with it. This ensures that manufacturers have easier access to the markets of all member countries when applying European standards.

To ensure that the EN standard remains current, it will be reviewed within five years of publication. This review results in confirmation, amendments, revision, or withdrawal of the EN. By registering to work in the Technical Committee, an organization accepts all rights and obligations arising from the participation of its representatives in the work of the Technical Committee. The rights and obligations of the interested party/member of the committee are defined in the Institute's Internal Rules.

Companies that are involved in the standardization process are in direct contact with experts from other fields on the one hand and potential competitors on the other. By applying standards, the private sector is allowed to use existing solutions, recognized safety and quality requirements, to enter the market with products and services that meet current requirements (Tolmač et al., 2012).. The significance of standardization for consumers lies in the fact that products and services become cheaper, products become safer and have acceptable levels of quality (standards form the basis for product quality and safety markings), giving consumers a choice in terms of cost. Standards ensure that products are environmentally friendly and fit for purpose, ultimately benefiting consumers.

By using standards, inspections enable more efficient control of product safety achieved and easier identification of non-compliance with products. Standards are widely used in occupational safety, environmental protection, and other areas. Standards also provide legal certainty, especially in cases where hazardous products or non-compliant products need to be identified after being placed on the market (Josimović & Adamović, 2017).

This chapter presents an analysis of current issues that serve as a kind of obstacle to Western Balkan countries on the path to obtaining full EU membership. The issue of constitutional reforms and institutional capacities is certainly one of the most important issues on this path. Our country, if it wants to obtain candidate status, needs a new, European constitutional and legal identity, as well as more functional institutions with larger administrative, technical, and infrastructural capacities necessary, primarily for the complex process of harmonization with the legal acquis. By emphasizing the basic premises, this work aims to provoke an objective approach to solving these issues, based primarily on scientific criteria and free from narrow partisan or ethnonational perspectives.



Figure 3. Geographic Overview of Serbia's Territory with Major Cities and Settlements

In this context, based on a comparative study of constitutional solutions and institutional capacities of certain EU member states, this work

provides a new structure for future constitutional reforms along two elementary directions. One direction relates to creating constitutional prerequisites for Serbia to function as a future EU member state, hopefully. The other direction relies more on the current process of Euro-integration and the conditions that the state of Serbia must fulfill to continue the ongoing process of Euro-accession.



Figure 4. Critical Thinking and Compromise in Achieving Eco-Standard Goals

In conclusion, we can state that, regardless of the general inconsistency and the rather scarce institutional capacities that the Republic of Serbia possesses in the process of Euro-integration, success on the path towards the EU depends not only on its institutional capacities and readiness at the organizational or expert level but, above all, on overcoming the deep contradictions arising from unresolved internal political issues. Therefore, it would be entirely superficial to identify the cause of this situation purely in the legal sphere, as the cause is deeper and

should primarily be sought in political contradictions. The deep division among political elites in the country and the neighborhood generates a core problem that later reflects on the strategic European orientation. The fundamental precondition for the successful continuation of the initiated process of Euro-integration is political will, namely complete consensus on the most important goals and developmental priorities of our country.

By using standards, inspections enable more efficient control of achieved product safety, as well as easier identification of non-compliance with products. Standards are widely used in occupational safety, environmental protection, and other areas. Standards also provide legal certainty, especially in cases where it is necessary to identify dangerous or non-compliant products after they have been placed on the market (Josić & Adamović, 2017).

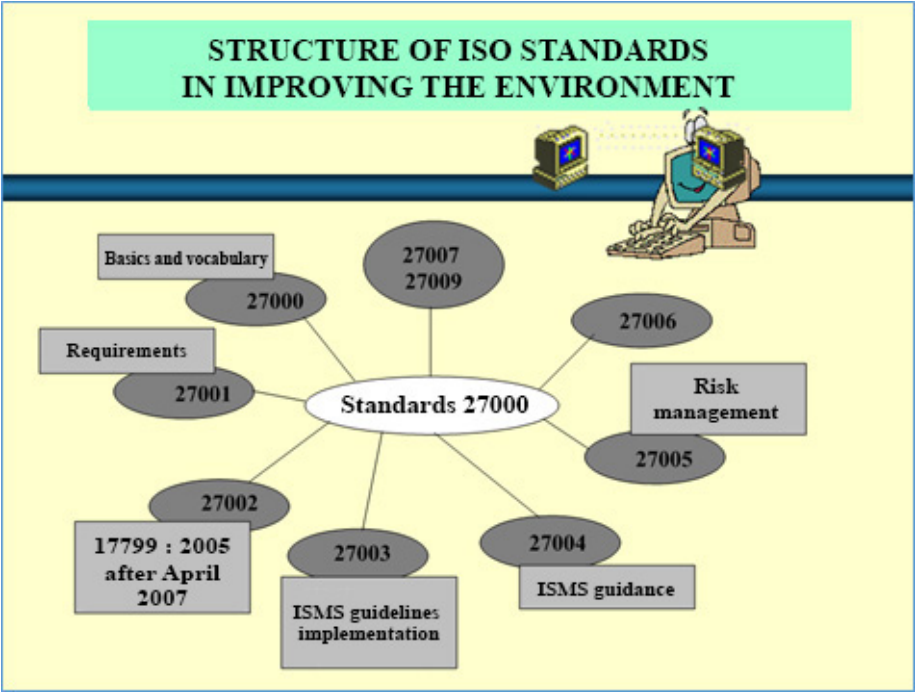


Figure 5. ISO 27000 Standards Providing Guidelines on Eco-Risk Conditions

The Assembly has declared environmental education a priority for the country. Education about environmental is mentioned in the NES (National Environmental Strategy), adopted by the Government in 2006. Also, the UNECE Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development has been translated into Serbian, and the national action plan for implementing the strategy is in preparation. Both the NES and the action plan have been developed through cooperation between the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Culture (responsible for education). The process of establishing an inter-ministerial Working Group to oversee the implementation of the strategy is underway.

CONCLUSION

Standardization is a functional instrument of self-regulation. Standardization through standards provides a basis for the development of technical regulations; a significant number of technical regulations refer to standards. Standardization is a crucial factor in strengthening a range of government policy activities, including overcoming trade barriers, fair trade, and protection of consumer interests, environmental protection and social interests, occupational safety, promotion of competitiveness, innovation, etc.

The official education system is currently undergoing reform. Elements of education for sustainable development are incorporated into various subjects in primary and secondary schools (*"World Around Us"* and *"Nature Guardians"* in all grades of primary school; *"Civic Education"* in primary and secondary schools). Education for sustainable development is also included to some extent in other subjects, such as biology and ecology, chemistry, geography, and physics, as well as philosophy, sociology, and human rights. A *"Handbook for Training Teaching Staff on Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development"* has been developed for primary and secondary schools. Special tools and materials have been developed for advanced environmental education, including topics from education for sustainable development, at the university level, at five universities (University of Belgrade, University of Niš, University of Novi Sad, University of Kragujevac, University of Novi Pazar) (Adamović, 2015).

To enhance their knowledge, teachers can choose from 190 accredited training programs, including 21 on ecology and 19 on biology. Regarding non-formal education and campaigns on environmental protection, the Nature Conservation Institute and the Recycling Agency are particularly effective, although the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Environmental Protection Agency are increasing their activities in this field. However, awareness of environmental protection among the general population in Serbia is low. Research conducted in 2003 showed that educated people are more willing to pay for the benefit of the environment. Raising awareness through special activities and campaigns has been successful in some cases among students, journalists, industry, and local authorities.

The conditions that candidate countries for EU membership must meet to become full members were clearly defined in 1993 within the "Criteria from Copenhagen". Three criteria are of importance: On the one hand, candidate countries must achieve stability of institutions ensuring democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and minority rights (political criterion). On the other hand, they must have a functioning market economy and sufficient competitiveness (economic criterion). Finally, a candidate must be able to adopt the so-called "Aquis Communautaire" of the European Union (EU), i.e., to adopt the common legal principles. This document contains all the obligations and rights applicable to EU member states. It includes all EU agreements, treaties, conventions, legal acts, and judgments of the European Court of Justice. This paper makes a modest contribution to the successful realization of the set tasks, with the help of literature and sources from the Internet.

This paper analyzes the constitutional-legal aspects of the process of harmonizing domestic regulations and the possible effects of harmonization not only in terms of achieving so-called external harmonization but also internal harmonization, i.e. from the perspective of preserving the unity of the internal legal order. The analysis showed that the blank acknowledgment of the direct application of all ratified international agreements in the process of implementing prescribed measures, especially those provisions of the Agreement that refer to the direct application of Community law and interpretation instruments adopted by the bodies of

the European Community, raises the question of the constitutionality of those provisions.

By ratifying the Stabilization and Association Agreement, rather than bringing it into force, as is customary practice with international treaties, pursuant to Article 72, paragraph 2 of the Agreement, Serbia has committed to "endeavor to gradually align its existing laws and future legislation with the legal acquis of the Community" in the areas specified in the Agreement. This is a complex obligation in whose fulfillment, in addition to legislative bodies, the organs of the other two branches of government will participate, so it can be said not only to legislative but also to judicial harmonization of internal regulations.

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