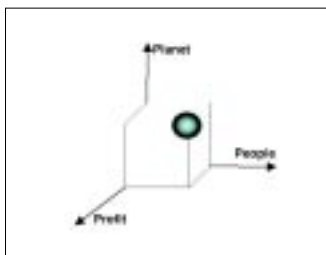


Sharing E^xperiences on Sustainable Development

Dr. Ing. Jonathan C. Borg & Engineer Mary Grace Micallef

COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD, including Malta continuously strive to develop their economies. Nevertheless, they also need to ensure that any development that takes place is executed in a sustainable manner. The concept of *Sustainable Development (SD)* is as a matter of fact concerned with such a balanced development between *People, Profit and our Planet (3Ps)* as schematically illustrated in the figure below. SD is thus not as many think, concerned with only the “planet’s environmental” issues - rather it is concerned with development taking place in equilibrium between the 3Ps.



To facilitate knowledge transfer taking place between different EU member states, the EU Socrates Programme funds what are known as *Learning Partnership Projects* called *Grundtvig 2*. One such project is *SDIT* (Sustainable Development and IT in Adult Education) which concerns the exploitation of Information Technology (IT) to enhance adult learning about the concept of Sustainable Development. Due to the proactive

role industry needs to take to support the concept of sustainable development, the Department of Manufacturing Engineering at the University of Malta joined SDIT in 2003. This has allowed the Department to cooperate and exchange case-studies with the other project partners coming from Latvia, The Netherlands, Italy and Belgium. For example, the Italians exploit Etna’s lava. Lava, apart from being processed and used for souvenirs is also utilised for pavement tiling. Furthermore, the fertile soil produced as a result of flowing lava is exploited for agriculture. Needless to say, the latest IT software and equipment are used to continuously record and monitor the behaviour of this volcano in order to be able to predict any eruptions that might occur.

A different perspective of SD is exploited in the Flemish region of Belgium, where one finds *Lidwina Foundation*. This is a ‘sheltered workplace’ that employs over 400, with 360 of the staff having either a mental or physical disability. Such ‘sheltered workplaces’ provide an environment where people with disabilities can carry out ‘minor’ jobs for a living which nevertheless enhance their self-esteem whilst also providing an added value from an industrial point of view. The Dutch partner, XGRANT, is concerned with the “people’s” perspective of SD. They help former drug addicts to get trained and employed so as to facilitate their re-integration within society. From the Maltese perspective, a presentation on the sustainable design of products was provided to the project partners during a visit made to Mol, Belgium. It concerned the design of a packaging container which besides taking environmental issues into consideration had to ensure that it could be fabricated economically and profitably. It provided an insight into IT-based tools used in designing products from a SD perspective. In Latvia, the partners visited the *Distance Education Centre* at Riga Technical University, where case-studies including the exploitation of fresh water flows for generating electricity



Packaging by disabled

were presented. Due to the different backgrounds of the partners involved, the SDIT project has been an excellent and effective mechanism for knowledge transfer on Sustainable Development to all partners concerned. One cannot but encourage others to exploit such EU knowledge transfer opportunities. Detailed information about the activities and events of this SDIT project including case-studies is available at: <http://www.eng.um.edu.mt/~dme/sdit.html>



Reuse in Latvia



SDIT Project Partners in Mol, Belgium
Dr Borg and Engineer Micallef are 3rd and 4th from left respectively

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