

STUDY ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FOURTH PILLAR ADDED AS A RESULT OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

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Abstract

In a century in which everything is directed towards consumerism, implicitly pollution, deforestation, neglect of the environment and not only, the concept of sustainability or sustainable development comes as a helping hand for everything around us: for us, for nature, for the future of the Earth. This concept arises from the need to protect ourselves from ourselves, from all the dangers to which we submit for the simple reason that we are not used to looking carefully to the future. The phrase "carpe diem" (live the moment) is not an exhortation that it is good to rely on in today's economic, social and environmental context. We have to look to the future and to protect it.

In this paper, after a brief history of global, European and national sustainability programs, we make an analysis of the influence of the pandemic period on sustainability programs. We also want to influence as many people as possible towards a behavior that fits in with the sustainability needs of the planet and of humanity, of our descendants.

What do each of us know when it comes to sustainability? Caring for the environment. Nothing less true. In addition to the environment, sustainability strategies have three other pillars in mind, one of which has been added to care for the future as a result of the COVID - 19 pandemic. I invite you to discover them together.

I intend to continue my research on topics related to the influence that content creators have through social media in the field of sustainability so i invite you to follow my future work.

Keywords: *sustainability, sustainable development, sustainability pillars, sustainability goals, COVID-19.*

1. Introduction

The great economic crisis of 1929-1933, started from overproduction was the starting point of the concept of sustainable development, coming in response to the ecological crisis caused by the major exploitation of resources, as well as the increased degradation of the environment.

The modern definition, in 2021, of the term sustainability is much broader than that offered in 1987. In a short time, we will see that the need to protect and preserve the environment dates back to the mid-seventeenth century in Germany, and aimed at forestry. According to the literature, sustainability encompasses three pillars that intersect in a common denominator the vector of sustainability, as follows: social, environmental and economic.

Appearance Commission report Brundtland entitled "Our Common Future" led in 1987 to the idea that "sustainability is provided to meet human needs while avoiding environmental problems, it said a growing movement expanded to economic development and sustainable and new techniques have been developed to enable the measurement and implementation of sustainability. " (Zaman & Goschin, 2010)

Sustainability can be approached, as stated by Professor Zaman "at different reference levels, in time, space and from an ecological, social or economic point of view. Sustainability science connects to several different disciplines and fields of research and, being

too complex to be fully understood using a single research method, considers specific ways of combining different disciplines. "(Zaman & Goschin, 2010)

As mentioned above, the term "sustainable" has its origins in Latin - *sustenerere*. The terminology is much older than we think. The appearance of the German term "nachhaltende Nutzung" (sustainable use) by Hanns Carl von Carlowitz in his publication on sustainable forestry is well documented in 1713. Many researchers have sought to find out the origins of this concept, and according to him (Caradonna, 2014), it considers "that the history of sustainability follows the ecological systems dominated by people from the first civilizations to the present."

In the article " Sustainable Development : A Bird's Eye View ", experts point out that there are three terms commonly used even interchangeably, namely "sustainable development", "sustainability" and "sustainable", which are used in several ways, often with different connotations. (Wass, Huge, Verbruggen, & Wright, 2011)

According to "Our Common Future", "sustainable development is defined as a development that" meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. „Sustainable development can be the organizing principle of sustainability, however others may consider the two terms to be paradoxical (i.e. development is inherently unsustainable).” (United Nations General Assembly, UN. Secretary-General, 1987).

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Some researchers argue that “sustainability is the “goal”, while sustainable development refers to the “process” of achieving it” (Zaccai, 2002)¹, but this conception is not consensual either.

However, in this paper we will use the two terms mentioned above interchangeably

2. Study about sustainable development

When we talk about sustainable development, we normally think of a concept that comes as a solution to current problems, problems that we face because of the rapid expansion and carelessness with which we treat the environment. If we were to summarize and address the colloquial issue, I believe that we can say that environmental sustainability is geared towards issues such as global warming, heavy pollution, major and negligent exploitation of resources. Therefore, we could put forward the idea that sustainability is considered a new model of development, which took shape towards the end of the twentieth century. However, the concept of sustainable development is much older.

2.1. History of the concept of sustainable development / sustainability

The problems and ideas we classify today under the concept of sustainability have their origins thousands of years ago. The search for a balance between the demand for raw materials for food, clothing, shelter, energy and other goods, but also awareness of the environmental limits of ecosystems has been a constant concern throughout human history.

Although the first records of the need to protect the environment appear as early as 8,000 -10,000 years ago, the period in which "agrarian communities emerged that depended largely on their environment and the creation of *permanent structures* " (Gasper, 1977), we will focus research on modern economic, environmental and social crises, which have led to the development and application of concepts and solutions globally.

It is important to remember the period of the Industrial Revolution, from the 18th and 19th centuries, in which the vast potential for increasing the energy based on fossil fuels was exploited. Coal was the basic source for powering more and more efficient engines, and later for generating electricity. Started in Western Europe, at the end of the twentieth century, the environmental problems caused by the Industrial Revolution became global. However, the development of the industry has also led to advances in medicine and the improvement of sanitation systems, which have protected large populations from disease.

Between 1950 and 1960, development continued to focus on economic growth and economic production. The early 1970s bring to mind the huge differences

between underdeveloped and developing countries. Part of the population faces great poverty, and all in all it brings to our attention the failure to share the benefits of economic growth with these countries, probably here being the roots of the need for socially sustainable development.

The energy crises of 1973 and 1979 call attention to the extent to which the entire population has become dependent on non-renewable energy resources. The 1970s severely put the planet to the test, which (Lin, et al., 2018) states that "In the 1970s, humanity's ecological footprint exceeded the earth's carrying capacity, so humanity's way of life became unsustainable ."

In the 1980s, environmental protection became the third major goal of development. In fact, we can even say that sustainable development is a combination of different ideas about progress, environmental protection, growth and development.

The famous Brundtland Report "Our Common Future", which I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, was published in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), established in 1983 by the UN General Assembly and chaired by Gro Harlem. Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway, also gave the name of this report. WCED has been tasked with formulating a "global agenda for change" (United Nations General Assembly, UN Secretary-General, 1987) and, compared to the previous report, has now managed to incorporate development and environmental protection measures.

The report serves as a vital step in the current thinking of development for at least four reasons: First, it launched a famous definition of sustainable development. The second important reason is to establish sustainable development as a substantial component of international development thinking and practice. Third, it initiated what we might call an explosion of work on sustainability. And last but not least, we mention the fact that it represents the discovery at a global level and the popularization of the concept of sustainability.

2.2. Modern landmarks in the process of sustainability

In recent decades, sustainable development has grown from what we can consider to be a simple alternative perspective on development to a recognized and politically supported development model. I want to mention three letters from the scientific community about the danger of increasingly at sea obey lack of concern for the environment and sustainability ways the backing them which can remove these threats.

In 1997, the Union of Concerned Scientists published the first warning to humanity that "Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course" (Scientists, 1997) , a letter signed by 1,700 of the most

¹ The paper quotes from Reid, D. Sustainable Development — An Introductory Guide; Earthscan: London, UK, 2005; Lozano, R. Envisioning sustainability three-dimensionally. J. Clean. Prod.2008, 16, 1838–1846.

important scientists. , many of them being Nobel laureates in science. The letter mentions "serious damage to the atmosphere, oceans, ecosystems, soil productivity and more. It warns mankind that life on earth, as we know it, can become impossible, and if humanity wants to prevent damage, some measures must be taken: better use of resources, abandonment of fossil fuels, stabilization of the human population, eradication of poverty " (Scientists , 1997) .

Ten years later, scientists wrote the second warning to humanity. This letter mentions positive trends, such as slowing down deforestation, but despite this, scientists say that, "except for ozone depletion, none of the problems mentioned in the first warning have been adequately addressed." Scientists "have called for reduced consumption of fossil fuels, meat and other resources and stabilization of the population" (Ripple, et al., 2017) . This letter has more co - signers and supporters than any other article ever published in the magazine. The article is signed by over 15,000 scientists from one hundred and eighty-four countries.

In 2019, a new warning letter was published. It is signed by over 11,000 scientists. Serious threats due to

climate change are being reported and major and urgent changes are being called for. The scientists called it a "climate emergency" and called for "stopping excessive consumption, replacing fossil fuels, consuming less meat, stabilizing the population and more." (J Ripple, Wolf, M Newsome, Barnard, & R Moomaw, 2019)

2.3. Global, European, national strategies for sustainable development

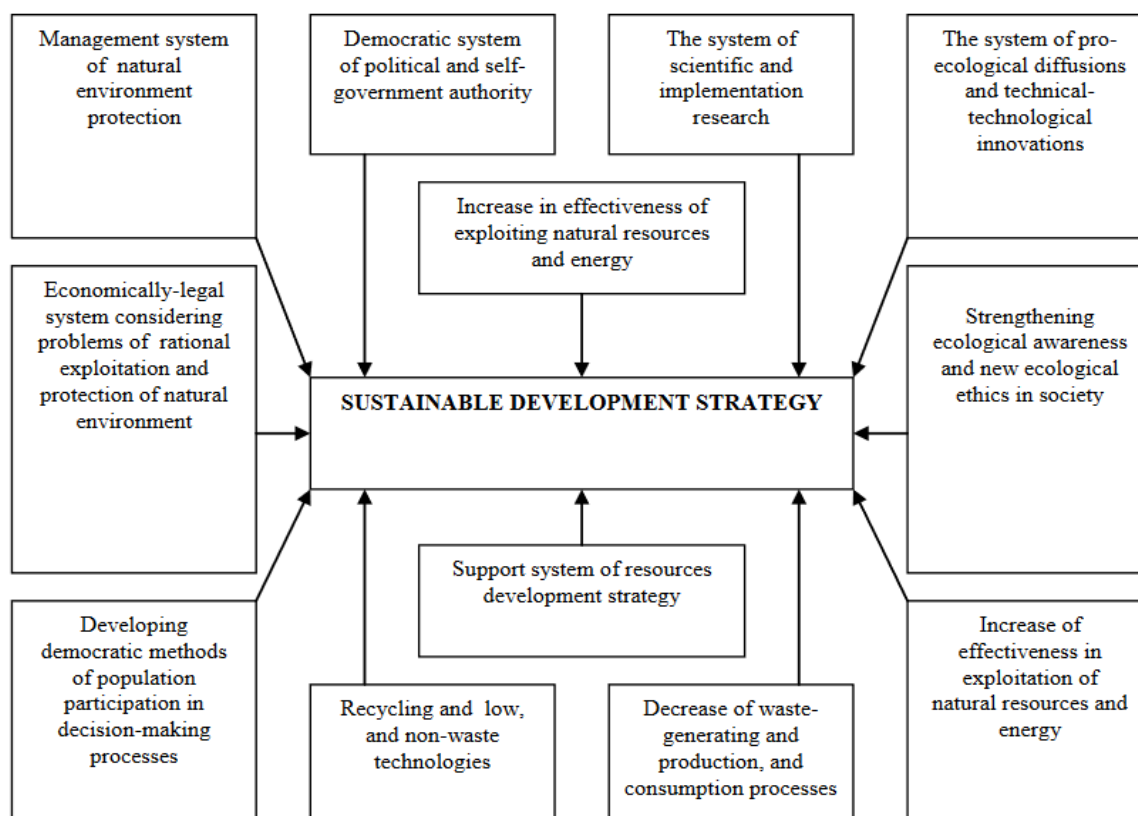
Pillars of sustainable development

Modern sustainability strategies are developed considering three pillars that definitely influence the future of humanity: economic, social and environmental or, informally, we can call them pillars of profits, planet and people.

Another perspective of the sustainable development strategy is presented by Annetta Zielinska in the paper "*Principles of sustainability versus sustainable development, eco- development with reference to the forms of natural areas of value*, as follows:

Figure 1

Source: Elements for achieving the sustainable development strategy, adaptation after (Zielińska, 2012) https://www.economics-sociology.eu/files/14_Anetta_3_3.pdf



The environmental pillar

In the era of the development of the concept of Industry 4.0 and implicitly the transition to digitalization, the strategic interest of the UN Agenda and the EU objectives focused on the environmental pillar. Recent research has shown that companies focus more on reducing their carbon footprint, packaging waste, water use and overall environmental impact. (Beattie, 2015) states about companies that "they have discovered that a beneficial impact on the planet can also have a positive financial impact." And today's consumer is much more selective in terms of the company from which they purchase products or services, the inclination towards the social and environmental environment being a criterion that prevails when making a purchase decision.

For example, "reducing the amount of material used in packaging usually reduces the total cost of these materials." Walmart has launched a campaign to achieve zero waste and has introduced packaging in line with the project, pushing for fewer packaging in their supply chain, and packaging to be made from recycled or reused materials².

The social pillar

Although it is the second pillar addressed in the paper, social sustainability is often "the most disadvantaged branch, receiving considerably less attention than economic and environmental sustainability." (Kandachar, 2014) Also, its definition is slightly uncertain and the area it covers is not as well defined as in the case of environmental and economic pillars. The social pillar is of particular importance in view of the fact that in the last decade, it has gained momentum through the attention paid by the business environment to the concept of social responsibility, especially in developed and highly developed countries. During the paper will be presented the implications, importance and role of social media, channels and popular tools used in promoting the social pillar that in recent years, has gained new value through various campaigns launched worldwide.

Social sustainability in the literature (Vallance, Perkins, & Dixon, 2011) has three components: "*social sustainability of development*, which is concerned with basic needs, equity inter- and intra-generational equity, *sustainability of bridge* is based on behavior change to achieve bio- physical environmental goals, *Sustainability of maintenance* refers to social acceptance or what can be sustained in social terms".

Social development aims to treat employees fairly, as well as ensure their responsible, ethical and sustainable treatment. A sustainable business should

have the support and approval of its employees, stakeholders and the community in which it operates. The social pillar can be reduced to equal treatment of employees, but also to being a good neighbor and member of the community, both locally and globally.

Returning to the work environment, when we talk about social sustainability we also mean that companies should focus on strategies for retention and involvement, including benefits for employees, such as better benefits for maternity and paternity, flexible schedule, as well as and learning and development opportunities. Companies have also come up with many ways to help the community, such as sponsorships, scholarships and investments in local public projects.

According to the Western Australian Council for Social Services, social sustainability occurs when "formal and informal processes actively support the ability of current and future generations to create healthy and viable communities. Socially sustainable communities are fair, diverse, connected and democratic and offer a good quality of life." (Western Australian Council of Social Service Inc., 2002).

Amartya Sen, the Nobel Laureate for her work on the well-being of the economy, offers the following dimensions for social sustainability:

"Equity - the community offers equitable opportunities and results for all its members, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.

Diversity - the community promotes and encourages diversity.

Social / interconnected cohesion - the community provides processes, systems and structures that promote connectivity inside and outside the community at a formal, informal and institutional level.

Quality of life - the community ensures that basic needs are met and promotes a good quality of life for all members at the individual, group and community level (e.g. health, housing, education, employment, safety).

Democracy and governance - the community provides open and accountable democratic processes and governance structures.

Maturity - the individual accepts the responsibility for consistent growth and improvement through broader social attributes (e.g., communication styles, behavioral patterns, indirect education, and philosophical explorations)" (Sen, 1999)

Social sustainability is not just the working environment, the rights and benefits offered to employees by employers, but also social inclusion, i.e. respect for the status and rights of all people equally, equality between the sexes, between races and acceptance of any social orientation. This goal is strongly transmitted in the online environment, there are hashtags used in huge numbers (#blm has over 26.2 million references)³, and the subject is a topical one,

² Walmart, "Reducing Waste" <https://corporate.walmart.com/global-responsibility/sustainability/sustainability-in-our-operations/reducing-waste>, accessed at 18 January 2021, 4:18 PM.

³ <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/blacklivesmatter/> accessed at 22 January 2021, 2:34 AM.

approached and promoted by the greatest influencers of the moment.

The economic pillar

The economic pillar of sustainability is the easiest to monitor. To be economically sustainable, a business must be profitable, so it must generate enough revenue to continue its business in the future.

This pillar is sometimes called the governance pillar, referring to good corporate governance. This means that "the board of directors and management align with the interests of shareholders, as well as the interests of the company community, value chains and end customers. In terms of governance, investors may want to know that a company uses accurate and transparent accounting methods and that shareholders are given the opportunity to vote on important issues. They may also want to ensure that firms avoid conflicts of interest in electing board members, do not use political contributions to obtain unjustified favorable treatment and, of course, do not engage in illegal practices" (Beattie, 2015).

(United Nations, 2014) has issued the Sustainable Development Goals, which are its main goals to give humanity and planet Earth a better and more sustainable future. The 17 sustainable development objectives materialized in 69 targets aim to solve economic, social and environmental problems that ensure respect for human rights and equality between all categories of individuals. All these objectives are projected until 2030, when it is hoped to eradicate poverty, eradicate hunger, ensure access to clean water and sanitation, clean energy at affordable prices and responsible consumption and production.

2.4. United Nations strategy on sustainable development

The title of the 15-year Agenda for Sustainable Development, starting in 2015, developed by the United Nations that aims to free humanity from poverty and protect the planet, is called "Transforming our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" and is the basis of the strategies adopted at continental or country level.

Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Signatory's agenda advocating for sustainability aim 17 sustainable development objectives (SDO) is very bold and says "We are determined to realize the three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social and environmental - in a balanced and integrated manner." (United Nations, 2014). The goals that the UN aims to achieve by 2030 are: no poverty, no hunger, health and well-being for all, quality education,

gender equality, clean water and sanitation, renewable and affordable energy, good jobs and good economy, and Novara infrastructure, reducing inequality, cities and communities sustainable, responsible use of resources, climate change, oceans and seas clean, sustainable use of land, peace, justice and strong institutions, partnerships for sustainable goals.

The goals are very great and I could say impossible to achieve in such a short time. Next we will discuss the first objectives and we will notice not only that no progress has been made to achieve them, but even, due to factors such as the COVID-19 crisis, we can even talk about regressions.

The goals of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda are interdependent, so resolving one has a favorable echo in achieving another goal. Thus, if we refer to two of these, namely the eradication of poverty and the eradication of hunger, we will see that those measures that lead to poverty reduction will have a positive resonance in eradicating hunger or, conversely, conditions that increase poverty will increase the degree of poverty. starvation of the population.

Poverty eradication by the end of 2030 is the first goal of sustainable development on the UN agenda because poverty is in stark contrast to the progress that humanity is experiencing today. "Despite ongoing progress, 10% of the world lives in poverty and struggles to meet basic needs such as health, education and access to water and sanitation" (World Bank, 2018). The report presented by the World Bank is a painful and difficult to overcome truth. I believe that this plan cannot, however, be completed so quickly. There are huge communities that still live in precarious conditions, and in many countries it seems an impossible goal for decades to come. In the case of the European Union, the plan is easier to achieve, here we are referring only to a few countries with a GDP that places them in the ranking of countries that are still facing poverty.

As a brake on achieving these goals, humanity faced the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which was a huge impediment to fighting poverty. A study published in September 2020 found that "poverty has increased by 7% in just a few months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, even though there have been steady declines over the past 20 years." (BMGF, 2020)

If the goal of eradicating poverty has been hampered by the unfavorable conditions of 2020, this is also reflected in the goal of sustainable development of ending hunger, ensuring food security and improved nutrition, which promotes sustainable agriculture. Globally, 1 in 9 children are malnourished and causes the death of more than three million children annually. At European level, the situation is not so dramatic, there are only eight countries facing famine: Ukraine, Bulgaria, Serbia, Cyprus, Slovakia, Macedonia, Albania and Estonia⁴.

⁴ <https://ourworldindata.org/hunger-and-undernourishment>, accessed at 4 February 2021, 10:41PM.

The level of malnutrition has increased from 2015 to the present, after declining in recent decades. The increase in malnutrition, similar to the increase in poverty, is also caused by, among other things, force majeure situations such as the locust crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.5. European Union Sustainable Development Agenda

The European Union aims to work with the UN to achieve the same 17 goals by the end of 2030. In addition to the 17 goals by which world leaders aim to eradicate poverty and protect the planet, the European Union has reached *the Paris Agreement* on change climate. Both goals represent "the path to a better world and the global framework for international cooperation in the field of sustainable development and its economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions." (European Commission, Paris)

It takes us less than 10 years to achieve the 2030 Agenda, and "the world is not on the right track, the COVID-19 pandemic has further aggravated existing inequalities, sometimes reversing progress on certain goals. Climate change, gender inequality and poverty are the most pressing issues and political will and ambition will be needed to recover better." (European Commission, 2020)⁵

In 2020, following the first wave of COVID-19, the European Union and its Member States state that "they are fully committed to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure its timely implementation.", (European Union and its Member States, 2020)

In addition to the goals proposed by the UN, the European Union has set itself the goal of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent through *the European Green Pact*. It is "the EU's new growth strategy, with people and the planet at its center." (European Union and its Member States, 2020)

The European Green Pact is an initiative started in 2019, which aims to present developments to all pillars of sustainability by 2050. "The European Green Pact is the EU's roadmap for achieving a sustainable economy." (European Commission, 2019)

From the point of view of environmental sustainability, Europe aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, on the economic front we want an increase that is decoupled from the use of resources, and social sustainability is supported by the fact that all people be integrated into society and included in the development plan.

2.6. Sustainable development program in Romania

The national strategy for the sustainable development of Romania 2030 was adopted by the

Government of Romania by Government Decision no. 877 of November 2018, this being elaborated under the direct coordination of the Department for sustainable development. Through this normative act, Romania adheres to the 17 sustainable development objectives proposed by the UN and adopted by the entire European Union.

In 2016, Romania registered a high share of materially deprived persons, compared to the EU average, being 23.8% following a report by INS⁶. Numerous measures have been taken to reduce this percentage, such as the Social Assistance Law no. 292/2011, Law no. 219/2015 on the social economy, the National strategy in the field of youth policy 2015-2020 was addressed.

Through sustained efforts, remarkable progress has been made on escalating poverty and in 2021, Romania was promoted by the World Bank at the level of the developed country, which means that we are on the right track to achieving economic, social and environmental sustainability goals. until 2030. The strategy that Romania approaches is oriented towards satisfying the needs of the citizens and focuses on resilience.

The strategy approached by Romania "starts from the premise that sustainable development presents a framework of thinking that, once mastered by the citizen, will help create a more equitable society, defined by balance and solidarity and that can cope with the changes brought by problems global, regional and national levels, including demographic decline." (Celac, Vădineanu, & others, 2018)

From the point of view of economic sustainability, Romania aims to record long-term economic growth. Even if in 2021 it received the status of a developed country, it can be claimed in case of economic setbacks. But, at present, Romania is on the right track and can reach the UN economic objectives.

The proposed targets for 2030 are "eradicating extreme poverty for all citizens, reducing the number of citizens living in relative poverty by at least half and strengthening the unitary national system of emergency response services, further rehabilitation and compensation for losses in the event of natural disasters, industrial accidents or extreme weather events." (Celac, Vădineanu, & others, 2018)

From a social point of view, it is necessary for Romania to offer its citizens a cohesive society, with a well-developed education and health system. One of the 17 objectives is to reduce inequalities between men and women, and Romania is the country with the lowest discrimination in this regard, especially in terms of wages.

We want society to be more open and citizens to feel supported. "It is necessary to cultivate the resilience of the population, so that the citizen, in a fair institutional framework, can realize his dreams at

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/international-strategies/sustainable-development-goals/eu-and-united-nations-common-goals-sustainable-future.ro>, accessed at 8 February, 1:43AM.

⁶ <http://statistici.insee.ro/shop/index.jsp?page=tempo2&lang=ro&context=20>, accessed at 15 Feb, 11:23 PM.

home. At the same time, the state must help increase the potential of the citizen by addressing issues related to health, education and the limits of the free market, problems that can be addressed through public policies, resulting in a high standard of living for all citizens." (Celac, Vădineanu, & others, 2018)

Romania aims to increase the social capital that leads to increasing the potential of the country's citizens, in order to achieve by its own forces, thus ensuring the sustainable development of the community.

Environmental sustainability is receiving more and more attention in our country, targeting both natural and anthropogenic environments. It is important to protect nature, based on human-environmental impact and put it in the forefront in achieving goals.

Some of the goals that Romania aims to meet by 2030 are: "expanding the transmission and distribution networks for electricity and natural gas in order to ensure access for domestic, industrial and commercial consumers to safe energy sources at acceptable prices, ensuring security of the monitoring platforms for the production, transmission and distribution networks of electricity and natural gas, decoupling economic growth from the process of resource depletion and environmental degradation by considerably increasing energy efficiency (by at least 27% compared to the status quo scenario) and the widespread use of the EU ETS scheme under predictable and stable market conditions, increasing the share of renewable energy sources and low-carbon fuels in the transport sector (electric vehicles), including alternative fuels, improving air quality, recycling in 55% proportion of municipal waste by 2025 and 60% by 2030." (Celac, Vădineanu, & others, 2018)

2.7. Sustainability during the pandemic

The year 2020 gave us another perspective on life. The pandemic, as well as other events that have taken place worldwide, lead us to the conclusion that sustainability is fast becoming the new reality of the world. In just a few months, COVID-19 has managed to transform the world, all at an economic, environmental and social price.

Crisis COVID-19 impacted strong corporate activity and generated a large number of changes on their communication strategy, supply chain, safety and health of employees, unemployment in large numbers and many other powerful transformation. However, the current downturn in economic activity is not expected to generate long-term environmental benefits.

Covid-19 made us aware of our vulnerability. The magnitude of the disturbance caused by this virus is comparable, in many ways, to a world where climate change is left uncontrolled. The pandemic allowed us to experience the real global disruption caused by a scientific- fantasy scenario event, which affected our entire social and economic system, although as a personal note, I would like to add an environmental issue. As a result, political and business leaders are

taking sustainability more seriously now, given the conditions caused by the pandemic.

In 2020, in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, the fourth pillar of sustainable development will be developed, namely the health pillar, which is interrelated with the environmental pillar, the economic pillar and the social pillar. A sustainable health and care system is achieved by providing high quality care and improving public health without depleting natural resources or causing severe environmental damage.

According to the World Bank Group "short-term considerations - over a period of six to eighteen months - for governments should be the impact of the pandemic on employment and economic activity, and how long it will take until the full implementation of the creation employment and tax incentives." The article also states that in the long run, governments must "consider the effect of COVID-19 on: (i) human and social capital; (ii) technologies; (iii) natural and cultural capital; (iv) physical capital; and (v) fundamental market failures." (World Bank Group, 2020)

In the new reality affected by COVID-19, it is essential for companies to integrate sustainability into a long-term recovery and growth plan. At the same time, significant barriers need to be overcome to reuse assets and capacity for post-pandemic markets.

From previous experience of the global financial crisis, it is suggested that any decrease in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is likely to be short-lived and followed by a return to emissions, increased due to stimulus packages and low greenhouse gas prices. Following the 2008 recession, "the subsequent increase in CO₂ emissions exceeded the observed transient decline and about 40% of the recovery effect was due to a small number of emerging economies, especially China and India. But the effect has also been substantial in the European Union (EU)." (Tienhaara, 2010)

It is important to place health and sustainability at the heart of the economy, implementing post-COVID-19 policies that achieve multiple goals: health, environmental sustainability, employment and equitable socio-economic recovery.

The economic policy response to the COVID-19 shock should pursue integrated actions to improve health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. (Haines, Pagano, & Guerriero, 2020) I argue that the means that will help in this regard are "eliminating harmful subsidies for health and climate and helping renewable energy sources to remain economically competitive, especially when oil prices are low, but also by recapitalizing companies not only according to economic criteria, but also based on environmental and health criteria."

The need for a post-COVID economic stimulus is an opportunity to redirect harmful subsidies for fossil fuels and other harmful products and services to more productive and necessary goods, as well as sustainable energy. "Currently, subsidies for fossil fuels remain high in some countries and exceed subsidies for

renewable sources" (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019).

According to the International Monetary Fund, "in 2015 global post-tax subsidies for fossil fuels were estimated at \$ 4.7 trillion, reflecting in particular the failure to take into account air pollution and the impact of climate change." (Coady, Parry, Le, & Shang, 2019)

The pandemic also greatly affects the social pillar. Inter-human relations are strongly impacted by the crisis caused by COVID-19. As we saw above, social sustainability includes both interactions for work, relationships with the employer, benefits offered at work, but also social inclusion and human adaptation. We can also talk about the fact that "sustainable human development can be seen as a development that promotes the capabilities of present people, without compromising the capabilities of future generations." (Sen AK, 2000) Societies have been isolated, borders have been closed due to the pandemic, and the unemployment rate is severely affected, rising. Companies are also in trouble.

Over the past year, pervasive challenges have undermined poverty reduction and inclusive growth. A study by the World Bank says that "recently, due to COVID-19 and the economic crisis associated with the pandemic, progress towards social inclusion has slowed down and long-term systemic inequalities and exclusions have been revealed. Extreme poverty is expected to increase due to the crisis, affecting between 73 and 117 million people. Recent protests against racism and persistent discrimination also underscore the structural barriers to opportunity and prosperity for so many human beings." (Sivaraman, 2020)

Sustainability and social inclusion also work between work teams to build tools to engage citizens in investment projects. It is very important that citizens are involved during the COVID-19 pandemic, as this can provide insight into how the crisis is affecting communities. In Afghanistan, citizen involvement means "working with communities to share COVID-19 prevention messages via WhatsApp and Telegraph, reaching out to people affected by the crisis, including refugees, people with disabilities, poor women and nomads. These channels of communication are two-way, enabling citizens to receive support and share information about changing situations in their communities." (Sivaraman, 2020)

3. Conclusions

Sustainable development normally leads us to think of a concept that comes as a solution to current problems, problems that we face due to the rapid expansion and carelessness with which we treat the environment. We could put forward the idea that sustainability is considered a new model of development, which took shape towards the end of the twentieth century. However, the concept of sustainable development is much older.

Modern sustainability strategies are developed considering three pillars that definitely influence the future of humanity: economic, social and environmental or, informally, we can call them pillars of profits, planet and people.

The three dimensions of sustainable development are inter-conditioned, the effects of any action whether positive or negative in one area, reflecting like "*boule of neige*" on the other two.

In the era of developing the concept of Industry 4.0 and implicitly the transition to digitalization, the strategic interest in global sustainability has focused on the environmental pillar. Recent research has shown that companies focus more on reducing their carbon footprint, packaging waste, water use and overall environmental impact. And today's consumer is much more selective in terms of the company from which they purchase products or services, the inclination towards the social environment is a criterion that prevails when making a purchase decision.

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Returning to the work environment, when we talk about social sustainability we also mean that companies should focus on strategies for retention and involvement, including benefits for employees, such as better benefits for maternity and paternity, flexible schedule, as well as and learning and development opportunities. Companies have also come up with many ways to help the community, such as sponsorships, scholarships and investments in local public projects.

The economic pillar of sustainability is the easiest to monitor. In order to be economically sustainable, a business must be profitable, so it must generate enough income to be able to continue its activity in the future. This pillar is sometimes called the governance pillar, referring to good corporate governance.

The signatories of the Agenda for Sustainability set out 17 Sustainable Development Goals which they aim to achieve by 2030: no poverty, no hunger, health and well-being for all, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, renewable and affordable energy, good jobs and a good economy, innovation and infrastructure, reducing inequality, sustainable cities and communities, responsible use of resources, combating climate change, clean oceans and seas, sustainable land use, peace, justice and strong institutions, partnerships for sustainable goals.

Covid-19 made us aware of our vulnerability. The magnitude of the disturbance caused by this virus is comparable, in many ways, to a world where climate

change is left uncontrolled. The pandemic allowed us to experience the real global disruption caused by a science-fiction scenario event, which affected our entire social and economic system, although as a personal note, I would like to add an environmental issue. As a result, political and business leaders are taking sustainability more seriously now, given the conditions caused by the pandemic.

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, in 2020 the fourth pillar of sustainable development will be developed, namely the health pillar, which is interrelated with the environmental pillar, the economic pillar and the social pillar. A sustainable health and care system is achieved by providing high quality care and improving public health without depleting natural resources or causing severe environmental damage.

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