

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

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In the conflict between industry and the environment, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the environment is emerging as the winner, as more and more business leaders are acknowledging the necessity of running their business in an environmentally-friendly manner.

Various environmental management tools, such as ISO 14001, are available to businesses in order to encourage the implementation of environmental policy. According to ISO 14001, the term "environment" is defined as the surroundings in which an organisation operates, including air, water, land, natural resources, flora, fauna, humans and their interrelations. Surroundings in this context extend from within the organisation to the global system. Consequently, an environmental management system must include the infrastructure and processes necessary for the design, development and continual improvement of environmental policy.

Environmental policy is the driver for a business to maintain and potentially improve its environmental performance. Businesses must commit to protecting the environment and to continually improving measures for pollution prevention. Environmental impact analyses can help a business restructure its activities with the aim of preventing environmental accidents and abuse. Besides raising environmental awareness among employees – a most crucial task – an environmental management programme encompasses all elements involved in the improvement of environmental practices. Pertinent legal regulations are taken into account in the attempt to reduce pollution and prevent accidents.

An environmental management system is an ongoing process, and a business should continually try to raise awareness of the importance of environmental protection among employees, the local administration and other concerned parties.

But how can such practices be funded? The Greek government, in co-operation with the European Commission, has provided incentives for businesses to develop an environmental profile and to make investments that can help them overcome possible financial difficulties. Any business wishing to implement an ISO system has the opportunity for a 50-75% state subsidy to cover the cost of developing such a system. Also, if a business wishes to invest in the installation of a biological treatment facility, special filtering devices, etc., state subsidies can reach 35-55%. A programme sponsored by the Greek Ministry of National Economy encourages businesses in the Balkan countries to develop environmental practices and investments.