



Munich Personal RePEc Archive

**Sustainable production and consumption
- the role of standardization, Ed.
"Ran-R", Sofia, 2018**

Vasileva, Elka

University of National and World Economy, Sofia, Bulgaria

2018

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/91539/>

MPRA Paper No. 91539, posted 28 Jan 2019 08:14 UTC

Sustainable Production and Consumption- The Role of Standardization

Prof. ELKA VASILEVA

Department of Economy of Natural Resources

University of National and World Economy

Studentski grad "Hristo Botev"

Sofia, Bulgaria

elkav@unwe.bg

Historically, the concept of sustainable consumption and production emerged at the United Nations Rio de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 when governments were committed to eliminating patterns of consumption and production which were inadequate to the requirements of sustainable development. Sustainable economy requires that production and consumption patterns support the long-term wellbeing of people, communities and nature conservation. It is based on the idea of meeting today's consumer needs without limiting the needs and opportunities of future generations.

In 2015, the UN New Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 was adopted and seventeen global goals were developed integrating the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development. Goal 12 is defined as "Ensuring Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns" (UN Global Goals 2030). It has a central role to play in tackling global consumption of resources and the environmental impacts associated with it, as well as numerous social and economic problems.

The promotion of sustainable patterns of consumption and production and sustainable lifestyle is linked to the creation of policies involving a large number of stakeholders which in turn will offer innovative policy solutions to sustainable development problems. Against the backdrop of a variety of policy initiatives at international, European and national level, there is a need in Bulgaria for policies encouraging sustainable production and consumption.

Standards have the potential to play a significant role in these processes, amid *a wide range of regulations and existing social norms* relating to sustainable consumption and production.

A number of authors emphasize that the current development of standardization builds on its conventional focus on technical facilities or systems with the inclusion of social and environmental themes (Bistro and Klintman, 2011, Brunsson and Jacobson, 2000, Busch, 2000, Tamm Hallstrom, 2008). They support the idea that standardization emerges as a common new form of regulation in today's globalized world alongside traditional legislation and social norms (Bostrom and Klintman, 2011; Brunsson and Jacobson, 2000). In their entirety, standards build a *"new institutional infrastructure"* for organizational sustainability and social responsibility (Rasche 2015; Waddock, 2008).

The monograph aims to identify the mechanisms by which standards support the implementation of sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

In order to achieve the stated objective, the study examines the problems posed both theoretically and by providing a solid empirical material oriented to the Bulgarian organizations in their national context.

The first chapter deals with sustainable consumption and production by attempting to clarify the essence of the concept and its many components. The policies, instruments and practices for sustainable consumption and production are examined at international, European and national levels.

The second chapter of the monographic work presents the theoretical foundations of standardization as an element of market infrastructure, basic definitions, principles and goals, as well as the benefits of standardization for modern organizations and other stakeholders. The standardization organizations, as well as the interaction between international, regional and national standardization systems are reviewed in a hierarchical way. A classification of the standards is made on various grounds (position in the hierarchy of standardization systems, purpose, supportive policies, etc.). The voluntary application of standards and their application in support of policies at regional level, following the example of European Union (EU) Directives of the so-called "New Approach", obligatory for the European Single Market, are discussed.

In *the third part*, the author poses a research question *"How standards support sustainable consumption and production?"* A variety of mechanisms are revealed on the basis

of the analysis and summary of a number of up-to-date scientific studies. Various standards are systematized along certain criteria, taking into account their role as *voluntary ("soft") policies* for implementing sustainable consumption and production. Within this typology are presented the results of national surveys, which specify a number of self-regulatory mechanisms for business organizations: through management standards, including environmental systems standards; through management standards according to international standards and other national specifications applied in selected sectors; through corporate integrated management systems including standards of quality, safety, environmental protection and other sustainability initiatives.

In addition, an original study is presented aimed at consumers as participants in the standardization processes and the creation of sustainable consumption and production standards.

The final part of the chapter reviews the criticism about the application of these standards.

Finally, a conclusion is drawn on the role of standards as a tool for sustainable consumption and production. The identified mechanisms by which standards support the implementation of sustainable models in business organizations are summarized. Emphasis is placed on the variety of standards, subjects of research in a national context, such as standards for sustainable business organization management and communication standards for sustainability initiatives. The conclusions drawn show a number of deficiencies in the perceptions, knowledge and the practices for introduction of the standards in the management of the surveyed organizations.

It is concluded that the lack of inclusion in the standard-setting processes can discourage consumers and lead to neglecting the ideas for sustainable consumption.

The monographic work addresses current issues of sustainable consumption and production patterns through voluntary standardization mechanisms as "soft" regulatory instruments - an area still under-researched on a national and regional scale. The presented studies are among the few similar analyses in this field. They concern issues related to the management models of Bulgarian organizations placed under regulatory pressure in the field of environmental protection and social responsibility and the uncertain choice of the voluntary approaches proposed by international and European standards. At the same time, these studies also look at Bulgarian consumers who have the right to "be heard" in the

development and implementation of government policies, laws and standards for sustainable consumption and production.

The publication is a result of the author's constant interest in the scientific study of the problems of sustainable development in the country in the last ten years. The research work, both individual and joint in a team of fellow researchers – the University of National and World Economy - Sofia is manifested in the implementation of numerous projects, establishing cooperation and membership in the thematic networks in the field of sustainable consumption and production.

The monograph could help all those interested in sustainable consumption and production problems - from Bulgarian consumers searching for their sustainable behaviour patterns, non-governmental organizations and consumer associations, through business organizations, certification and training organizations and reaches the state institutions setting out the policies and tools for implementation of these models.

Sofia, Bulgaria