

ENTERPRISES POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic, which is still in full swing, is a current challenge for all mankind, which has very severe social and economic consequences. Since the beginning of the pandemic, each state has acted to support its own economy. The most exposed economic sectors are: services, tourism and transport. The decrease of the domestic demand but also of the international demand for goods and services, caused by the spread of COVID-19, led to the decrease of the production, of the services offer. During 2020, the increase in the production price generated by the obstacles in the supply of raw materials, materials, etc. is estimated, but also, with pressures on sales prices, due to declining demand.

However, businesses must find a way to survive, to grow sustainably in the medium term at least. Thus, they must find solutions that they can apply as soon as possible. These solutions are represented by the policies that organizations establish and implement.

Enterprise policies are represented by a set of objectives set in the medium term, which refers to all activities of the enterprise or only to important components of the organization, together with: necessary resources, major actions to be taken, main managers and executors, sources of financing, completion deadlines, but also intermediate deadlines, efficiency indicators (global but also partial). The paper presents the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economic environment, the need for sustainable business development, in this context but also the medium-term policies needed to be applied to overcome this global crisis.

Keywords: enterprises policies, sustainable development, context of COVID-19, quality of life, economic relaunch,

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1. Introduction

The year 2019 was a slow, relatively quiet one, the world having of course its “normal” problems [11].

The coronavirus pandemic (which occurred in December 2019 in Wuhan, China) required the isolation of citizens, not necessarily as a measure to defeat the virus, but to slow down the infection process, so as not to exceed the capacity of the public health system to cope [5]. This imposed isolation has created difficulties in the functioning of national economies. Public policies were oriented towards man, towards the health of the individual. The economic consequences have exceeded all expectations. The isolation of the population has destroyed the relationship between employee and employer, between producer and customer, both nationally and internationally. Thus, economic structures and relations were severely affected. The borders have been closed, which has affected the global economy. This pandemic has highlighted the importance of being prepared for any crisis that may arise [10].

The COVID-19 pandemic that generates economic effects difficult to assess for now, is also a psychological pandemic, which brings disruptions in human behavior, and which influences the functioning of all markets: goods, capital, and services, monetary, financial.

There are also some positive effects of the pandemic: the digitalization of government but also of the whole social life is accelerated, distance education is intensified, businesses are operating more and more in the online environment, the consumption of local products is increasing.

In this context of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has fundamentally changed the landmarks of today's world, the sustainable development of the enterprise is a solution to the current crisis, necessary for the reconstruction that will follow, but also to prevent future similar situations. The principles of sustainable development are more needed to be applied than ever before. It is necessary to transform the current crisis into an opportunity to achieve a solid, sustainable social and economic reconstruction, through the use of appropriate policies, which seek to introduce new elements, not taken into account in developing strategies [6] - no one and nothing did not predict this COVID -19 pandemic.

2. Enterprises policies for sustainable development in the context of COVID-19

Sustainable development can be achieved only by ensuring the balance between socio-economic systems and natural potential [3]. Sustainable development is a concept that first appeared in 1987 and refers to the development of industrial civilization, which is constantly growing and the limited resources of the planet, to ensure this growth [7].

The COVID-19 pandemic creates major dysfunctions in the economy, in the business world, which is no longer able to function as before.

The national policies that pandemic affected states must apply for sustainable development are:

- legislative framework:
 - ✚ drafting laws to strengthen worker protection or adapt the current legislative framework to emergencies;
 - ✚ monitoring and reaction to such violations: sale of false protective equipment, etc.
- providing facilities:
 - ✚ providing guidance to businesses on how to manage the COVID-19 epidemic;
 - ✚ establishing channels of dialogue between companies and other stakeholders to seek guidance, advice;
 - ✚ addressing the spread of misinformation and harmful content related to COVID-19;
 - ✚ facilitating collective initiatives across the economy and various stakeholders, large-scale assistance, ensuring responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- cooperation:
 - ✚ with other governments to adopt trade policies that facilitate the supply of essential medicines and equipment;
 - ✚ consultation with employees and other stakeholders on defining expectations for the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - ✚ ensuring that emergency measures taken by governments are non-discriminatory.
- examples - models to follow:
 - ✚ ensuring the protection of workers, presenting best practices, such as social distancing within the government, etc.;
 - ✚ adoption of the highest standards of conduct and responsible responses to the COVID-19 outbreak in state-owned enterprises.

Enterprises policies for sustainable development in the context of COVID-19 are a reflection of public policies, but also include specific elements depending on the field of activity, organizational culture, etc. Current enterprise policies would need to address:

- ✚ digitization, teleworking;
- ✚ accessing non-reimbursable financing;
- ✚ protection of workers at work;
- ✚ consultation with employees and other stakeholders on defining expectations for the COVID-19 pandemic;

- ✚ use of innovative technologies to assist in the treatment, testing, monitoring or other aspects of COVID-19 pandemic;
- ✚ international trade.

It highlights, in the context of COVID-19, the overall enterprise policy and the partial policies that enterprises need to develop and implement in order to overcome this crisis. As partial policy models for this period, necessary for sustainable development, we can consider:

- A. the company's policy to manage the infection of employees with COVID-19 at work;
- B. the company's policy of maintaining and increasing economic indicators: sales volume, turnover, profit, number of employees, in the context of COVID -19, for sustainable development.

A. Company policy to manage the infection of employees with COVID-19 at work

The company's policies are not only simple concretizations of the strategy, but also take into account the changes in the external and internal environment of the company, which contributes to increasing the company's performance by applying these policies, adapted to the time it is implemented.

The elaboration of the “Company policy to manage the infection of employees with COVID-19 at work” has become a necessity in the context of the emergence of COVID-19. No one and nothing predicted this fact, when the global policy and the partial policies of the company were drawn up.

Today, this policy is needed to overcome the difficult times we are going through. It's like a rescue plan in case of need. The structure of the “Company policy to manage the infection of COVID-19 employees at work” is as follows [6]:

- ✓ presentation of medium-term objectives, through this policy aiming at: reducing the exposure to COVID-19, at the workplace; safe resumption of activity after a break; managing employees who work from home; managing the high absenteeism rate; managing employees who have been ill.
- ✓ the determination of the volume and resources necessary to achieve the objectives is made according to the number of employees, the financial strength of the company, access to non-reimbursable financing for COVID-19 management in the company, the object of activity, and includes material, financial and human resources may make them available to manage the infection of employees with COVID-19.
- ✓ establishing actions that lead to the achievement of objectives, thus mobilizing all the company's resources. The main actions to be taken to manage COVID-19 in the enterprise are considered to be the following: risk assessment in the enterprise and establishing appropriate measures, employee involvement, remote work as a modern way of practicing the profession, management of sick employees, lessons learned what needs to be passed on in the future, good information for employees.
- ✓ prioritizing the actions according to the needs of the company, in order to face, in time, all the requests. Thus, we can start with the reassessment of risks in the company, we continue with the establishment of employees who can work remotely, the establishment of activities to be carried out in shifts, then the management of sick employees, the transmission of lessons, good practices for the future. Throughout the implementation of this policy it is necessary a good information of the employees and their involvement in all activities.
- ✓ establishing those responsible for implementation, both among managers at all hierarchical levels of the company, and among workers, depending on the complexity of the activity. For example, for the remote work of employees, the manager who leads the department in which those employees work is responsible.
- ✓ deadlines are set according to the complexity, necessity and periodicity of the activities. For example, long-distance work can be undertaken until any danger regarding COVID-19 is removed, as well as shift work.

- ✓ the approval of the realized policy is necessary and is done by the management team of the company. Without this approval, the "Company policy to manage the infection of employees with COVID-19 at work" cannot be applied.
- ✓ the distribution of actions to employees, the establishment of their tasks, is the last step before the effective implementation of this policy. Basically, at this stage, the responsibilities are established, among the employees, to apply the provisions established in the “Company policy through which to manage the infection of employees with COVID-19 at work”. For example, the risk assessment in the company is performed by the workers designated for this purpose, the remote work is performed by employees whose trades can be performed without the physical presence in the company.

The company's policies are established at different hierarchical levels. Top management policies reflect the mission, purpose, business philosophy of the company. Policies developed for lower hierarchical levels are intended to put into practice policies developed for higher hierarchical levels, so they are more explicit, more concrete, more detailed, with limited areas of applicability and short time horizons to be put into practice [6].

Another policy, important to develop and implement in the company, in the current context of the presence of COVID-19, and which helps the company to develop sustainably is “The company's policy of maintaining and increasing economic indicators: sales volume, turnover, profit , the number of employees, in the context of COVID -19 ”

B. The company's policy of maintaining and increasing economic indicators: sales volume, turnover, profit, number of employees, in the context of COVID -19, for sustainable development

Starting from the fact that in this period of crisis generated by COVID -19, the main problems faced by companies are: high production costs, high labor costs, lack of well-trained labor, lack of demand for goods and services on the market, the lack of transport infrastructure, the need for public investments, the unpredictability of the fiscal environment. We can thus signal the need to develop, approve and implement the "Policy of the company to maintain and increase economic indicators: sales volume, turnover, profit and number of employees, in the context of COVID -19".

The composition of the policy is as follows - with the mention that it is a policy established at the level of top management of the company, and will be a more general policy, with a small degree of detail, and covering large areas of business:

- ✓ presentation of the medium-term objectives necessary to be realised: promotion and sale of the company's products and services online, business development in the online environment, investments in real estate, on the stock exchange, or in other instruments that will have a decreasing price, work from home employees, hiring skilled, valuable staff who lost their jobs in the pandemic, expanding into some markets where some competitors have disappeared, launching new products or increasing the number of products required on the market during this period.
- ✓ the determination of the volume and resources necessary to achieve the objectives is given by the financial possibilities of the company but also by the possibility to attract external financial resources in the nature of loans or access to non-reimbursable financing.
- ✓ the establishment of actions leading to the achievement of the objectives is necessary for the implementation of this policy. These actions mean: creating digital platforms needed for online commerce and promotion, buying shares, employees to do work remotely, loans to provide liquidity and investment in innovation, development, submission of projects for obtaining non-reimbursable funds.

- ✓ prioritization of actions as follows: ensuring liquidity from own or attracted sources; online presence, to expand sales and promote business; implementation of work remotely, in shifts, staggered; hiring qualified staff, laid off during this crisis period; investment in real estate and the stock market, investment in innovation and business expansion.
- ✓ establishing those responsible for the implementation, depending on the complexity of the actions, the people in charge can be the top managers or from the other hierarchical levels.
- ✓ the deadlines depend on the urgency of the implementation of the actions, on the financial, material and human possibilities of the company. The telework regime, for example, can be implemented with the approval of this Policy, until overcoming this crisis generated by COVID-19, and if it benefits the company, the duration of the implementation of this action can be extended.
- ✓ the approval of the policy is necessary because without its approval by the management of the enterprise it is not possible to start the implementation.
- ✓ distribution of actions to the persons responsible for the implementation of the actions. For example, the manager of the department in which the employee works is responsible for remote work.

3. Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected society as a whole. Public and private policies are needed which, in addition to reducing the negative effects, also ensure sustainable development in the medium and long term. We must, we owe it to future generations, to have the courage to design a future society, after overcoming the pandemic, in which the quality of life is at an even higher level than before. However, it is necessary the involvement of public authorities, but also the involvement of the private sector, civil society experts, academia, research institutes, NGOs. We all need to change and become citizens who believe in the principles of sustainable development and who put them into practice in their daily lives.

Establishing global and partial policies means providing major guidelines for the overall business of the company, and creating both “Company policy to manage the infection of employees with COVID-19 at work” and “Company policy of maintenance and growth of economic indicators: sales volume, turnover, profit, number of employees, in the context of COVID-19, is for any company its concern to provide solutions for both managing the infection of employees with COVID-19 and overcoming the economic stalemate by which more and more companies pass and why not the sustainable development of the enterprise.

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