

THE EUROPEAN ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY'S ROAD TO SUSTAINABILITY

TEXT STEPHEN WELLER - COMMUNICATION MANAGER - EUROPEAN ALUMINIUM ASSOCIATION

In 2002 the European Aluminium Association and its member companies embarked on a journey towards sustainability. Through the already established dialogue campaign - Aluminium For Future Generations - the aluminium industry came together with partners from the renowned Wuppertal Institute in Germany and Versailles University in France to develop what we have come to know as our sustainable development indicators or SDIs.

Thirty four separate SDIs were developed for the purpose of systematically measuring the sustainability of our industry continuously and transparently.

They cover areas as varied as employee development and relations, community relationships, health and safety, resource use, emissions, product life cycles, management efforts, competitiveness and of course production and revenues.

Our first report was issued in 2004 and covered the period from 1997 to 2002, painting a picture of an industry significantly improved over the period and clearly committed to continuous improvement towards sustainability.

This year's review covering the period from 1997 to 2005 shows further improvements

over the last three years:

- + Emissions are down
- + Natural resource use is down
- + Worker safety is up
- + Worker training is up
- + Recycling rates are up

In the Health and Safety category, total recordable incidents fell 63.9% between 1997 and 2005, while the industry's fossil fuel requirements for metal production fell 30% and direct climate gas emissions were reduced by 43.5%. In the same timeframe, in terms of actual metal production only 14% of the production had an ISO* or OHSAS** certification in 1997 whereas in 2005 this has grown to 80%.

These results are all heading in the right direction. However, we are always looking to include more plants from all the sectors of the industry to take part in the survey and in this way to be even more representative of our sector. The objective is to encourage the industry to do more to ensure sustainability, and to promote our track record to the world beyond our members and stakehold-

ers - encouraging others to take steps in this direction.

The driving principle behind any sustainable development strategy is to decouple growth from environmental and social impacts. That means healthy profits for sure, but also a healthy environment and a healthy community. Economy, ecology and social responsibility must walk hand in hand. This was the challenge the aluminium industry set itself when it developed the Sustainability Mission Statement in 2004. It committed to:

- + Meeting the needs of society and creating value by offering aluminium products with unique properties, including recyclability.
- + Reducing the environmental impact throughout the product's lifecycle.
- + Demonstrate social responsibility towards employees.
- + Achieve continuous progress by sharing best practices and introducing regular indicator based reporting.
- + Encourage member companies to work along the lines of environmental and social conventions such as the Global Compact.

these market-based solutions by means of encouraging and facilitating information exchange among environmental professionals. By using market-based solutions to tackle environmental issues and providing programs in education and training, the EMA has expanded public awareness and knowledge of market-based solutions. This open forum has created a vast network bringing together green technology companies, large utilities, emissions brokers and traders, and offset sellers to share ideas that increase the beneficial impact of emissions trading. In the last year alone, the EMA has executed two emission-neutral conferences through the purchasing of offset credits.

By simply using electronic events such as web-based seminars, the EMA has successfully reduced over 100 tons of emissions, and further increased its positive effect on cli-

FOR THE ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY SUSTAINABILITY IS MORE THAN JUST AN INITIATIVE, IT IS A PHILOSOPHY. IT RUNS RIGHT THROUGH THE INDUSTRY INFLUENCING EVERY ACTIVITY AND DECISION TAKEN.

The aluminium industry can proudly state today that it has stuck to this mission statement and delivered real progress towards a sustainable European aluminium industry.

Aluminium is a young metal and a young industry in historical terms. In a short time period it has become part of the industrial fabric of Europe. It has created jobs, innovation and value. The industry has behaved responsibly towards its workers and their communities. It has respected the environment and will continue to do so wherever it operates.

For the aluminium industry sustainability is more than just an initiative, it is a philosophy. It runs right through the industry influencing

mate change through conservation of paper often used for programmes, attendance lists, and presentations. These web-based events also reach customers who are restricted by time and budget and decrease additional risks from hotel attrition, and food and beverage expenses and travel expenses.

With the amount of options available to associations, it is hard to believe that more groups haven't jumped on board the green bandwagon. With a little creativity, associations can become more current, efficient, and sustainable in these changing times.

Lauren LeMunyan is a Client Manager at Association Global Services (AGS) and acting Executive Director of Environmental Markets Association (EMA).

every activity and decision taken. The industry is committed to this philosophy and the continuous improvement it demands. To demonstrate this, the industry regularly assesses and evaluates progress in open and transparent fora, discussing improvements in performance. The industry asks its stakeholders if the indicators are still valid, if there are any gaps, and if the industry doing enough in all the areas. Feedback from peers and stakeholders is vital in order to continuously improve performance.

To work effectively towards sustainability, progress needs to be benchmarked against a clear and realistic perception of the internal and external business reality. The data collected needs to be validated and accredited. Reliable measurement is essential not only for credibility with stakeholders but also to guarantee an industry's commitment to continued monitoring, careful evaluation, committed implementation and tangible results.

This article is the result of a partnership between ESAE and the Europe and Middle East Region of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) <http://europe.iabc.com>

For more details on the EAA's Sustainable Development Indicators please visit: www.aluminium.org

* ISO: Acronym for the International Standards Organization, an International organization working with the United Nations that maintains standards for all applications of technology for global industry

** OHAS: Occupational Health & Safety Assessment