Webwatch

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ECOSEED—the global green portal

<http://www.earthportal.org/>

ECOSEED is a web portal aiming to provide its users and visitors with the most complete and updated information in areas related to the environment, and how it impacts businesses around the world. This green sector has seen in recent years an explosive growth, and it is becoming one of the backbones of the new global economy, as sustainable development is one of the foundations of the future development of future human societies. ECOSEED tries as much as possible to serve as central resource to companies and other organizations that operate or have interests in the growing green sector, but have different goals or different operational constraints.

Thus, ECOSEED presents news and information in a wide variety of areas, including technological advances, new products and processes, commerce, finance, legislation, political development at the regional, national or international levels, exchange of information, among others. In the website all information is classified by subject, to facilitate the search of information. In the main page, it is possible to directly access the latest news, and to keep updated about the evolution of the main financial indicators related with the green sector. Direct links send the user to areas dealing with specific subjects, such as renewable energy, carbon footprint, among others. This include not only news, but also publications and reports (freely available as much as possible), links to other sites, and

introductions to the specific area. Other sections include a market place with business offers, products and services listed there, and a finance section that deals with the financing and economic development of the environmental business area. To keep updated, RSS feeds are available in various subjects, allowing the user to select the most convenient ones. To be able to post offers and news or to participate in the forums discussions, a registration is necessary, but it is free.

Even though the huge variety of themes the website does a good job in organizing all the information. Menus and a search facility are available in all pages that simplify the navigation and exploration of the site. Yet, in some areas the site would improve significantly if links to external information are available, such as other sites or freely available reports or white papers. However, as a site that is constantly updated, it deserves regular visits by everybody interested in the green sector.

Earth Portal

<http://www.ecoseed.org/>

The Earth Portal is an online resource portal created by the Environmental Information Coalition (EIC) to provide accurate, actual and science-based information regarding the environment and its interactions with human societies. Its main goals are to serve as a free, expert driven and actualized resource hub to facilitate the engagement and the discussion of environmental issues and how they affect human societies. The EIC is a group of individuals, mainly research scientists and educators from a wide range of fields of American institutions. The EIC is responsible for the definition of the editorial policy and guidelines of the

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various sections of the Earth Portal, control of the contents accuracy and adequacy, members' roles and obligations, as well as for keeping the website online and updated.

The Earth Portal is comprised itself of three parts. The Encyclopedia of Earth is a collection of articles in a wide variety of themes in the environmental sciences field, written and critically reviewed by scholars and specialists from around the world in a voluntary basis. The Earth News is a collection of news from different sources identified by the authors or topic editors and deemed relevant for inclusion in the site. The Earth Forum is the section of the Earth Portal where the interested public can suggest themes, or engage in the ongoing discussions with experts on various environmental issues at the local, regional, national or global levels, in scientific, political, or other fields.

Each part operates as an independent website, although there are numerous links from one part to another to complete and extend the information given in different areas of the site. In each one a list of recent news is given, as well as a list of areas and hot topics that can be accessed directly from the main sites. As the Earth Portal is a huge site, this helps people navigate through the various sections and find what they are looking for. A search facility is also available in each webpage.

As an organization aiming at fostering the participation from different areas and degrees of expertise, information is given at the site on how to become involved, participate, and keep updated, for example receiving the free newsletter or subscribing to the RSS feeds. Examples of other relevant parts include the e-books sections in the Encyclopedia of Earth, the EoE for Educators with educational resources, among many others.

Although most of the information, articles and areas are freely accessible, some parts of the website are restricted to members of the earth portal community, or are open only after registration, as the discussion forums in the Earth Forum. This is necessary in order to control the quality of the information provided and to ensure that it remains meaningful. Yet, the information already available at the site and the inclusion of more articles and news make it an excellent starting point and reference site for people interested in the environmental area.

GreenBlue

<http://www.greenblue.org>

GreenBlue is a non profit organization founded in 2002 as a spinoff of a set of projects developed by a private sustainable product and process design consultancy company, the McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry (<http://www.mbdc.com/>). GreenBlue main aims are the stimulation of

creative design and redesign of industrial processes, products or services, using the expertise of professionals from various fields, for the development of practical solutions and/or opportunities to move in the direction of sustainable development.

GreenBlue develops its activities mainly through projects in specific areas, in cooperation with industry and other stakeholders, yet broad enough to cover full activity sectors, life cycle and supply chain inclusive. An example is the Textiles Industry, where GreenBlue is working to develop sustainable textiles standards, including all stages of their life cycle, from raw materials to final disposal. A description of all ongoing and already finished projects can be found in the website to everyone interested, including the main goals and partners of each one.

More information can be found at the website that, although has a very simple and clear presentation, it is not very easy to read since a small font is used. Navigation is easy through the menu present in all web pages. In the resources page it is possible to find some freely downloadable publications of GreenBlue, in particular focusing in the questions and issues of designing processes and products for sustainability, as well as some project descriptions and main results. Also, it is possible to sign up for periodical updates about the activities, projects and results obtained by GreenBlue.

Although the information available at the site is limited, it is nevertheless an appealing site for people interested on how the design of industrial processes, products and/or services can be used to promote sustainable development. As this subject becomes ever more important and the GreenBlue activities develop, it is expected that the website will be further developed and more information will be included.

Clean production action

<http://cleanproduction.org/Home.php>

The Clean Production Action (CPA) is a project that has as main goals the design and practical implementation of solutions and policies to decrease the environmental impact and increase the sustainability of existing or future processes and/or products. The project is supported by the Tides Center (www.tidescenter.org) that deals with all the bureaucratic and technical questions of the CPA activities. This organization is also involved in sustainable development, but with different focus areas.

CPA tries as much as possible to translate the concepts of cleaner production, in particular its system-based vision into practical strategies that businesses, companies, governmental and other private institutions can use and implement in order to be more environmentally and

sustainability friendly. CPA works together with stakeholders from around the world, promoting new partnerships, and developing and communicating new solutions to existing and future problems.

The website presents and describes the CPAs main areas of activity. It includes, but is not limited to, green chemistry and green chemicals, sustainable materials, preferable sustainable products, strategies or methodologies to cleaner production, reverse logistics (in the producers take back section), among others. Each one can be accessed directly from the main page, and in each section it is possible to find a brief description of past and ongoing activities, people or institutions involved, and results and publications that resulted from CPA activities. Whenever deemed relevant, links are given to other pages of the site or even exterior to it. A list containing all publications, reports, news and other information can also be found, most of them freely downloadable.

The site is simple and easy to navigate, with a menu and a search facility presented in all pages. Yet, no RSS field

and e-mail newsletter are available, making it harder to keep updated with the CPA activities. Although it may look that there is not a lot of information available at the site, the main sections of the site correspond to areas that are currently or expected to be very important in future, as for example reverse logistics. Thus, the publications and other information of the site are relevant to people working or with interest in the area of clean production, and worth regular visits.

Final words

We will return on the next issue with a fresh selection of sites. If you know of sites that are worthy of being presented, send us all relevant information to the following e-mail address: amartins@fe.up.pt. Any suggestions will be considered with great attention for possible publication. In that case the contributors names will be acknowledge in this column. Surf well.