Webwatch

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World Wide Fund for Nature

<http://wwf.panda.org/>

The World Wide Fund for Nature, commonly known as WWF and widely recognized by its logo featuring a giant panda, is the largest international non-governmental organization, which main activities are focused on the Environment. The WWF was created more than 50 years ago in Switzerland under the name World Wildlife Fund and its initial headquarters were in Morges, Switzerland. Since its creation it has grown considerably, currently having more than 5 million members worldwide. It changed its designation in 1986 to better reflect its activities and goals, although in Canada and the U.S., its name is still the original. The WWF is still based in Switzerland, but currently it has offices in more than 80 countries.

Initially, the WWF's focus was the protection of endangered species. With the development of its activities and the availability of more funds, its activities moved to other areas directly related to the environment and sustainable development. Currently, its main mission is “to stop and reverse the destruction of our environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.” Currently the main focus areas are the conservation of the world biodiversity, insuring the sustainable use of natural renewable resources, and reduce the pollution and waste generation due to overconsumption. Also, the WWF has started to take a strategic approach to its activities to insure more effective and enduring results.

To fulfill its mission, the WWF carries out or participates in projects in a wide variety of areas with all the relevant stakeholders including, for example, UN organizations, the World Bank, and various international or local industrial and business partners. Currently, the WWF runs more than 1,000 projects in more than 100 countries in areas such as education, protection of endangered species, ecosystem recovering, among others. The projects are funded mainly with contributions from individual donors, but a sizable part coming from governmental agencies and companies.

The website tries as much as possible to give a detailed and objective picture of the WWF history and current activities. In the “WWF?” tab, it is possible to find an account of the WWF history together with copies of key documents and the evolution of the areas where this organization develops its activities. Also, there a list of achievements and of the current governance structure, in this case with detailed reports of activities. In the “What we do” tab it is possible to find information on the ongoing and past activities of the WWF. In particular, the focus areas and global initiatives defined in the strategic plan are presented. Each one has its proper subsite, where one can find news, ongoing and past activities, a description of problems and potential solutions, publications, and other information about them. The tab “Our world” gives presentations on several topics pertinent to the WWF activities, presenting their current status and relevant problems, and how one can help, with a focus on the actions of the general public. A special section named “You can help” gives more information and advice on things that can be done to improve the state of the environment, including supporting the WWF either financially or through voluntary or paid work in one of the ongoing projects. Also available are the main publications of the WWF, such as

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the organization strategy and the annual Living Planet Reports. In other sections, news of events and other activities can be found, together with the WWF newsletter that can be freely subscribed to at the site.

More specific information on the activities of each regional and national branch can be found in particular website links that can be accessed through a pop-up on the top of each page. Navigation at the site is easy and a search facility is available, although there is some repetition between the various pages, and sometimes too much information is given. Even though the focus of site and the WWF is still very much on conservation, the site has enough information on other areas to address the needs of practitioners and people with interests in the environmental area.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation

<http://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org>

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation (EMF) is an independent charity organization created in 2010 and currently based in the Isle of Wight, United Kingdom. It was founded by Dame Ellen MacArthur with support from a group of five industrial partners—B&Q, BT, Cisco, National Grid, and Renault—that together with the founder provided the necessary financial support to start EMF activities.

The EMF mission is to encourage and promote the development and implementation of a future circular economy, comparable to the functioning of natural systems. The EMF has three main goals. One is to develop a coherent framework for change, considering the needs and aims of all relevant stakeholders. The other is to develop the core capabilities and knowledge necessary to build a circular economy, based on a systems framework approach. This involves addressing the main questions concerning research, design, and how to transmit the knowledge between the various stakeholders as for example educating the younger generations. And finally, the third goal is to actively engage with industry and relevant partners in the value chain to demonstrate the need and the potential for a circular economy, challenging the status quo.

Paramount to all areas, the need to properly communicate and disperse the relevant information to all partners is crucial to insure a faster progress toward a circular economy. This is also the main goal of the EMF website. In there, it is possible to find a description of what is meant by a circular economy, in the “Circular Economy” tab, and what are the main concepts behind it, and its advantages from a sustainability point of view. Special sections aimed at business and the education deal with the specific needs of both areas. In the business section, articles, case studies,

and other pieces of information can be found in order to assist companies understand how a circular economy can be good for their activities. For example, a recent report titled “Towards the Circular Economy” done in partnership with a consultancy firm tries to show companies the potential and opportunities in a circular economy. In the education section, the focus is on the education of the new generations, and plenty of resources are available, including curricula and other teaching materials. In the “About” tab, a description of the history and structure of this foundation can be found.

Even though the EMF is very young, the site already has very interesting materials available to various stakeholders, in particular in the education area. They are freely available, but they require people to sign up for it, which can be done freely using Facebook. The site is still very simple and small, but with the evolution of the activities of the EMF, more materials and information will be added to it. A free e-mail update can be requested at the site to keep people informed about EMF activities, making it a site that should to be visited periodically.

Natural Resources Defense Council

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

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is a North American not for profit and non-partisan organization of international environmental advocacy, founded in 1970 by a group of scientists and attorneys directly involved in the environmental movement. Currently, the NRDC has offices in several cities in the U.S. and in Beijing, China, and is one of the world largest organizations of its kinds with more than 1 million members and activists, and a staff of over 300 people, consisting mainly of lawyers, scientists, and other professionals. It is considered one of most relevant and powerful organizations dedicated to environmental protection.

The NRDC mission is “To safeguard the Earth: its people, its plants and animals and the natural systems on which all life depends.” To fulfill this mission the NRDC develops its activities on a broad range of issues, including for example: protection of ecosystems and wildlife, recycling, renewable energy, policy making, sustainability living, among others. Of the multitude of potential issues, priority is given to a few ones deemed relevant by the members of the NRDC, including climate change, creating and developing a clean energy future, and water supply. In each area, the NRDC works with the relevant stakeholders, in particular national and local governments and industrial companies, to develop policies better suited from an environmental and sustainability point of view on a variety

of issues such as climate change and energy efficiency, among others. Also relevant are the litigation activities, in particular to enforce environmental legislation and regulations, and performing reviews of legislative laws and other regulations to identify, for example, what needs to be improved. The NDRC also supports some research activities with a focus on the manufacturing processes, with the goal of developing and promoting sustainable production systems and practices, and on public education activities aimed especially at the general public. The NDRC also performs some projects/initiatives on specific topics with local stakeholders as, for example, an initiative on clean design in Bangladesh and the Biogems initiative for the defense of ecosystems.

The website serves mainly to support and present the activities of the NDRC. From the main webpage it is possible to access directly the pages of some ongoing initiatives and campaigns where more information about them can be obtained. Multimedia materials, current news, access to the blogs, and a specific area with news and information aimed at business can also be accessed directly from the main page. In all pages, a set of keywords is presented linking to specific pages, aiming to assist people navigate through the site. In the “About NDRC” tab, all information about this organization, activity reports, contacts, and current strategic issues can be found. The “Issue” section further describes all the areas where the NDRC develops its activities, with a focus on the priority issues. Each one has a particular area where ongoing initiatives and projects are described together with their results. The “Policy” section contains the reports and other publications resulting from NDRC activities, blog posts, legislative reviews, and other information, all of them freely available. A document database can be found at the site on various relevant topics, giving direct access to the publications.

Since the site boasts of a lot of information, specific materials can be difficult to find even though a search facility is available. In particular, some initiatives have their own sites, and people may easily get lost. Also, no information is given in the site about the NDRC journal, *One Earth* (available at <http://www.onearth.org>). A newsletter can be subscribed to for free from the main webpage to assist people in staying updated about the NDRC activities. Despite the drawbacks, the site represents a valuable source of information to many practitioners in the environmental area.

European Environmental Bureau

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

The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) is an umbrella organization that groups together more than 100

environmentally focused organizations from all the European Union (EU) member states, candidate members, and other neighbor countries with a direct interest in the EU legislation and regulations. The member organizations range from local to regional, national, and even international, and correspond to more than 15 million members. The EEB was founded in 1974 as a response to the emerging union environmental policy, and it is currently based in Brussels and acts as a focal point for its members.

The main aim of the EEB is to enable the European citizens to play a part in protecting and improving Europe’s environment. As most of the environmental laws and regulations are currently defined in Brussels, the EEB tries to fulfill its mission by influencing the EU policy-making process and assessing their implementation and results. All actions are based on the values upheld by the EEB, in particular its commitment to sustainable development, environmental justice, transparency, and participatory democracy extended to all stakeholders. Thus, the EEB works closely with all the EU main institutions, in particular the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of Europe, of which it is a consultative body. The EEB also organizes events and campaigns on specific objects for diverse audiences, for example to inform the public of specific topics of their interest.

The site tries to give a description as complete as possible of EEB activities. In the main webpage, the EEB’s main goals and values are presented, with direct links to its strategic objectives. Also, the recent news, ongoing activities and campaigns are presented among other information. More detailed information about each topic can be found by following the links in the menu presented on the main page of the site. For example, in the “About EEB” section, it is possible to find a description of the goals and mission of the EEB, how the EU works, where the EEB fits in, and a list of donors that support and/or fund its activities. The “Library” section is one of the most relevant of the site, as it is possible to find there, for example, EEB position papers, assessments on specific topics, and other relevant information, most of them freely available. A free email newsletter can be subscribed to at the site, named *Metamorphosis*, which summarizes all the EEB activities and allows people to be updated on its activities.

The EEB is a good example of a non-governmental organization that tries to make an impact in policy-making definition and implementation. The site gives a good account of the EEB activities and of their main results. Also, for assisting people in finding what they want, a search facility is available on all pages of the site. Overall, the site is a good reference for people planning or already engaging in the activities promoted by the EEB.

Final words

We will return in the next issue with a fresh selection of sites. If you know of sites that are worthy of being presented, send all the 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 acknowledged in this column. Surf well.