

How can a single company make a change to quality of air, life and environment?

Introduction

Under the Paris Agreement signed in 2015, 197 countries from all over the world have committed to environmental protection and a more climate friendly approach in all areas of day-to-day practices, business and industry. Not only reducing CO₂ emissions is of immense importance, but also taking actions against other pollutants harm the environment, threaten public health and worsen air quality. This is the responsibility of all companies, starting with the largest, to engage this fight and the sector of energy and oil and gas has a special role to play, taking concrete actions and investing in sustainability.

A growing concern for public health and pollution

The European Union has taken several initiatives to fight air pollution, passing directives on ambient air quality and cleaner air, medium combustion plant or industrial emissions. All aim to make air cleaner for Europe and its citizens. As required by this EU legislation, but also as a reaction to highly worrying levels of particulate matter and other harming pollutants found across European cities, policy-makers have decided to pass demanding measures to protect public health and environment. For instance, this year, Paris, London and Brussels have announced to introduce 'Clean Air Zones' and 'Low Emission Zones' in order to drastically limit pollution from all origins.

A strategic role for the industry

Notwithstanding these efforts, it is of crucial importance to understand that it is not only the responsibility of governments and public bodies to act: a strong signal has to be sent from within the industry as well. Preserving good air quality and protecting the environment are not a top-down process, but one to be determined at every stage of the chain. Even though there is a high number of rules and regulations already in place that determine industry processes and limit pollution by putting a price tag on it, an extra effort needs to be made and this can be achieved already by companies who are motivated to make a change at their level and to be a role model for others in the same sector and region. To this end, the **Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control permit (IPPC)**, issued by the European Commission, incentivises companies and certifies industrial installations operating under certain rules. Small efforts are not enough to obtain such a permit; the installations applying for the permit must meet requirements related to energy efficiency, waste disposal, emissions into air, water and land and prevention of accidents among others, before they can get approved.

Seeing the bigger picture...

In September 2017, our oil refinery in Pančevo, where we made investments worth €3 million, has been granted such an IPPC permit, the first to be granted to an energy facility in Serbia, confirming that the

production process in the refinery meets the highest domestic and EU standards in the field of environmental protection. The plant applies the so-called “Best Available Techniques” (BAT), defined to implement the EU legislation, and it takes into account the unique environment in which the oil refinery operates on numerous aspects including social, working or nature dimensions. Indeed, our oil refinery in Pančevo is not only meeting all these standards but is also addressing the bigger picture and driving modern solutions like the installation of separators for treating oily atmospheric water, finishing reconstruction and modernization of the dock as well as working on new concepts of permanent waste disposal or improving accident technique responses. In addition, we have committed to a systemic approach to energy management, by using the international standard ISO 50.001 system, known as a reliable benchmark in the energy sector. Lastly, because we see environmental protection as an issue of heart and of utmost importance, more than €6.7 million have also been invested by NIS in environmental protection and the preservation of resources projects in past two years.

...and going the extra mile to make a difference

We have enshrined our commitment to environmental standards and to constantly improve sustainable business conduct year by year. This commitment is our drive to go the extra mile and to achieve more than the mandatory obligations, which the EU and public authorities require. We have placed environmental protection and improved quality of life high up on the list of our priorities. Concrete projects effectively reducing NO_x and SO_x emissions is the way for companies in general and those from the energy, oil and gas sectors in particular to make a difference to air quality and the well-being of citizens. So far, NIS is one of the only companies in Southeastern Europe to make that additional effort, investing into sustainable development, enhancing environmental protection and life quality not only of people working for us but also of the citizens living in the area of our operations. Being socially responsive and making better living and health conditions possible demands some effort and a significant amount of investments in the long-term. We are happy to be a pioneer in that matter hope that more companies, will commit to make that extra effort.