



The impact of building must be divided into two categories:

- The impact of the industry, during the processes of materials and building components production;
- The impact of the construction works and the use of buildings during their whole life cycle, including demolition.

Though ecological impacts are the most quantitatively known, and probably the easiest to reduce, it is no longer possible to focus only on the environment. The social, cultural and economic impacts occurring in built areas are now considered to be the other components of the sustainable construction concept.

ISO technical committee ISO/TC 59, *Building construction*, subcommittee SC 17, *Sustainability in building construction*, chose to orientate its work in two directions. First, by answering the international demand for definitions of the environmental and sanitary performances of building products and of what the environmental performance of a building means today. Second, since the sustainable development concept has now surpassed the single environmental approach, the subcommittee is trying to find a common definition of what the sustainability in construction could be and how this new concept could be applied.

Taking aboard all stakeholders

When talking about sustainable development in construction, every “component” of building construction should be considered including: the building itself, (all the stakeholders) and the connections between the building and its environment. In addition to this, social, economic and environmental aspects must be simultaneously considered. In order to represent all these aspects, it is important that SC 17 brings together experts from as many countries as possible, including those of

Social and economic aspects of building construction

by Jacques Lair, Chair of ISO/TC 59/SC 17, Sustainability in building construction

The quality of the built environment affects not only individual cities and the advantages that each one of them offers, but also the quality of life and well-being of communities. The building construction industry is well known for being the largest industrial employer, and is also responsible for a great amount of waste and general pollution.

Building designers, manufacturers of building products, building users and owners and others active in this sector, are more frequently asking for information that will allow them to make decisions that will address the environmental impacts of buildings and other constructions.

Main Focus

environmental, social and economic backgrounds. The definition of what a sustainable construction is varies and depends on the country, its needs and scale. Other considerations include urban versus rural, the organization of the construction industry and the use of the construction built. General principles must give everyone involved in a construction process the method required to structure the objectives, in order to best answer the sustainability goal.

“Social, cultural and economic impacts occurring in built areas are now considered to be the other components of the sustainable construction concept.”

The building industry’s next “best-sellers”

To achieve this goal, TC 59/SC 17 must continue its work, and especially focus on social and economic aspects of building construction.

TC 59/SC 17 has established four working groups (WG) on the following themes:

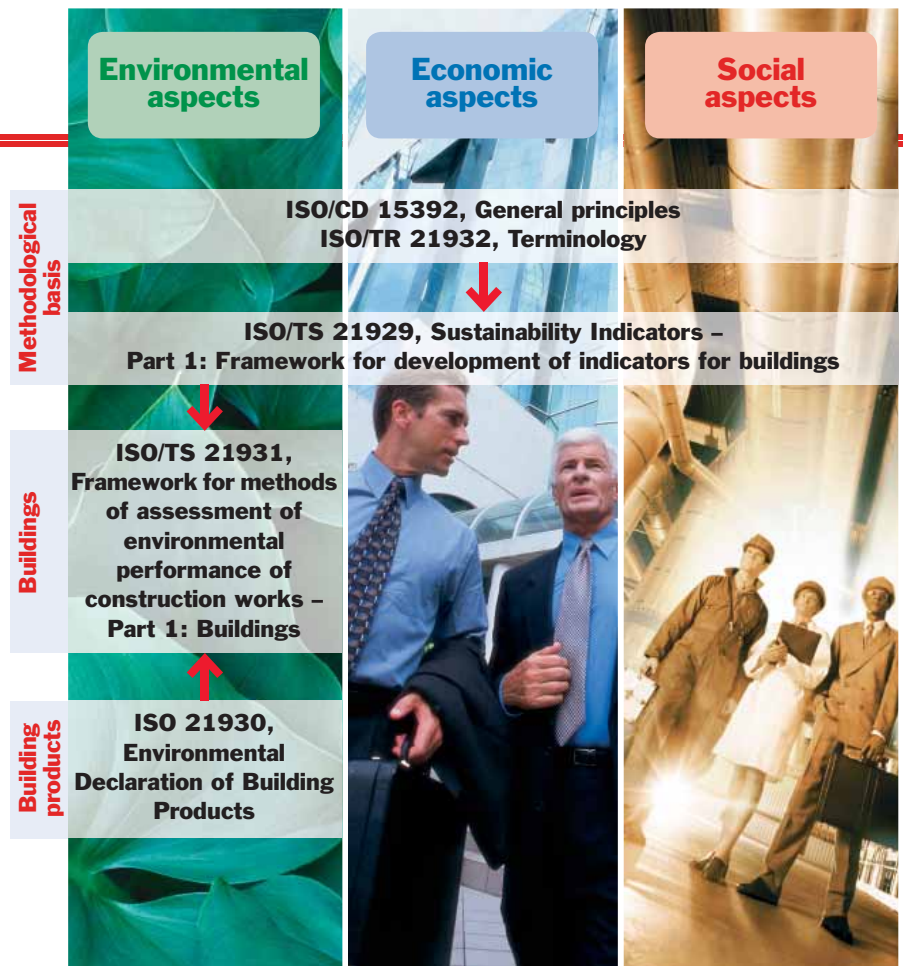
- WG 1 covers ISO/CD 15392, *Building and constructed assets – Sustainable building – General Principles*. The standard gives general principles

About the author



Jacques Lair is Chair of ISO/TC 59, *Building construction*, SC 17, *Sustainability in building construction*. He is a civil works contractor,

member of the executive committee of the French Building Federation, Vice President of QUALIBAT (French professional qualification body) and Judge in a Trade Tribunal.



of sustainability for the construction sector and all interested parties and establishes a rationale for subsequent, related standards. It is based on the following three primary aspects of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social. WG 1 also covers ISO/TR 21932:2004, *Buildings and constructed assets – Sustainability in building construction – Terminology*. This technical report gives the terminology used in ISO/CD 15392.

- WG 2 covers technical specification ISO/TS 21929:2005, *Sustainability indicators*. The aim of the technical specification is to define the process to follow when addressing the sustainability of a building, in order to support the assessment thereof and of constructive assets using a common framework and set of indicators.
- WG 3 covers ISO/DIS 21930, *Environmental declarations of building products*. This standard gives a general framework, principles and requirements for conducting Type III¹⁾ environmental declarations of building products, by emphasizing comprehensive, verifiable and accurate informa-

tion regarding environmental aspects within Type III environmental declarations programmes for planning and assessing buildings. It gives guidelines for the development and implementation of such declarations based on the life cycle assessment for building products within these programmes.

- WG 4 covers ISO/TS 21931:2005, *Framework for methods of assessment for environmental performance of construction works – Part 1: Buildings*. This technical specification identifies and describes issues to be taken into account when using methods for assessment of the environmental performance of new and existing buildings in the design, construction, operation, refurbishment and deconstruction stages. It provides a general framework to improve the quality, transparency and comparability of building assessment methods, which could also be useful for communicating assessment results. ■

1) Type III environmental declarations present quantified life cycle product information, to enable comparisons between products fulfilling the same function.