

A Code of Conduct for the natural stone sector

Sustainability criteria to support supply chain responsibility throughout the chain



**Dutch Working Group
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'Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a solution oriented process in which a company assumes responsibility for social, environmental and economic issues in its sphere of influence, including the entire supply (or value) chain. The company is accountable and maintains dialogue with relevant stakeholders.'

Introduction: The development of a Code of Conduct

In the Netherlands, individual companies and representatives of the natural stone industry have joined hands with civil society organisations and public agencies to develop a common approach on the basis of emerging notions of responsibility and accountability for occurring social and environmental issues throughout the natural stone supply chain. They established a 'Working Group on Sustainable Natural Stone'. Participants are some businesses, Dutch business associations, a human rights organisation with a focus on labour issues, an environmental organisation, development organisations and two research and consultancy agencies. This Working Group decided to develop a Code of Conduct for Dutch natural stone companies to go by and spread throughout the chain. In the longer time, the Working Group strives for an internationally accepted and used code.

This Code is built upon two pillars: on the one hand normative criteria concerning social, ecological and economic issues, derived from international standards, and on the other hand operational requirements, derived from experienced CSR-schemes in other sectors. This Code specifically addresses both social and ecological issues, since it is recognized that there often is a correlation between the two categories of issues. Simultaneously, the subscribers to this Code recognise that a voluntarily adopted Code of conduct cannot replace national or international legislation. To the contrary, CSR intends to strengthen and support compliance with and implementation of international and national laws and regulations.

In the last decade there has been a growing attention for, interest in and improvement of sustainability performance throughout supply chains, from producers up to and including consumers. With respect to the quarrying and processing of natural stone and natural stone products in developing countries, however, sustainability standards may definitely be lifted to a higher level. Violations of basic labour rights still occur and good care for natural resources is not always considered. Although locally labour and environmental legislation may well be in place, compliance to and enforcement of such legislation may be lacking. Adopting a CSR perspective, the subscribers to this Code choose to play a pro-active role in addressing potential sustainability issues and increasing the performance level throughout the supply chain. Obviously, the perception on sustainability issues and the perceived level of current practices differ from country to country, region to region, as well as depend on the type of stone, the size of the quarry or the processing plant, and many other variable factors. Still, the principle remains the same: the subscribers to this Code acknowledge supply chain responsibility and are determined to make an effort to contribute to increased sustainability performance with due respect for national and international laws and regulations throughout their respective supply/value chains.

The following standards have been used as inspiration for the drafting of the Code of Conduct for the natural stone industry:

International standards	National legislation	Voluntary standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International Labour Organisation (<u>ILO</u>) - Universal Declaration on Human Rights - International conventions and agreements concerning environmental issues - Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (<u>OECD</u>)¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department of Mines & Geology (Rajasthan) - Eco-Friendly Mining (<u>DMG</u>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethical Trade Initiative (<u>ETI</u>) - European Ecolabel for hard floor coverings (<u>Ecolabel</u>) - Fair Wear Foundation (<u>FWF</u>) - Forest Stewardship Council (<u>FSC</u>) - Generic Fairtrade Standards for Hired Labour/Small Farmers' Organisations (<u>FT</u>) - Milieukeur Certification scheme for furniture (<u>MK</u>) - Rainforest Alliance (<u>RA</u>) - Utz Kapeh (<u>UK</u>) - Xertifix (<u>X</u>)

The Code of Conduct in practice

Given the complexity of the global natural stone industry as well as the harsh competition among natural stone companies, the Working Group firmly believes in and wishes to promote a process approach. The starting point of this Code is the good intention to assume responsibility and to contribute to improving sustainability performance throughout the supply chain. Not all changes can be attained overnight. In defining CSR policies and practices, the subscribers to this Code will try to strike a balance between ambition and pragmatism, of course with due respect to minimum requirements. The norms described in this Code will need to be embedded in a transparent time frame.

As a matter of principle, the Code of Conduct needs to be complied with at all levels of the supply chain. The subscribers to this Code, however, recognise that sourcing companies by virtue of their buying power have a crucial position and a bigger responsibility to ensure compliance down the supply chain. Providing guidance and support to supply chain partners in producing countries is essential in this respect.

Subscribers to this Code believe that CSR should be part of a company's core business, and be integrated throughout the management system. It is understood that the inclusion of CSR principles might affect purchasing practices, such as agreements on price and delivery times. The definition of the *quality* of a product will change accordingly, i.e. a high quality product will, eventually, by definition be produced in compliance with CSR-norms. Moreover, subscribers to this Code are aware that compliance with CSR standards may involve costs, such as the payment of overtime or minimum wages or the provision of drinking water. However, motivated and trained workers generally have a higher output and care for the environment, such as reduced water use, can save some costs. In any way, increased costs should not exclusively be borne by the producer/supplier. By principle, the sourcing company, the party imposing CSR standards upon the supplier, will have to bear (part of) these costs. To make this possible without disadvantaging some players, a *level playing field* needs to be created. Implementation of this Code can only become truly effective when a larger group of companies subscribes to its contents. Current subscribers will therefore make an effort to promote the Code.

¹ Some Dutch subsidy regulations require applying companies to adhere to the OECD Guidelines. So far, this has not been the case in tenders with respect to natural stone. It is targeted that the Dutch government will adhere to 'sustainable procurement' as of 2010.

The Working Group will stimulate the market performance of products produced according to the code of conduct and support companies in their process towards *sustaining* their supply chains. These products (and companies) have opportunities to distinguish themselves in the market.

Contents

- Societal issues
- Labour issues
- Environmental issues
- Operational requirements

Societal issues

Companies active in the natural stone sector are part of the overall society. This section addresses the key issues and expectations society may have towards these companies.

Laws and quarrying/processing licenses

Norm

The company respects all applicable local, national and international laws and legislation of the country(ies) in which it operates, and arranges for obtaining the required quarrying and/or processing licenses prior to activities being undertaken.

Requirements

- The company ensures that the conditions under which the products they provide are produced meet all agreed and legally required standards. (OECD) Special attention is being paid to compliance with labour and environmental laws and legislation as well as with sector standards.
- The company promotes employee awareness in respect of the importance of compliance with all applicable laws and policies. (OECD)
- The relevant authorities have granted licenses for all extraction and processing activities taking place. (RA)

Example of verification

- The company keeps records to show its compliance with applicable law and legislation.
- The company acknowledges in writing that permits have been obtained in a legally sound way.

Stakeholders

Norm

The company pays attention to building a good relationship with its stakeholders by setting up dialogues and regularly providing information. Specific attention is being paid to local communities. The company encourages local capacity building through close co-operation (OECD) and respects any legal or customary tenure or use rights over the area local communities/indigenous people may have. Delegation of control over the area can only take place with free, prior and informed consent. (FSC)

Requirements

- The company respects any and all rights of those affected by its activities. (OECD)
- The company respects areas and activities that are important to its stakeholders from a social, cultural, biological, environmental and/or religious point of view. (RA)
- The company implements and carries out policies to ensure that stakeholders be consulted and regarded in case the company undertakes new activities and/or amends current activities in a manner that interests of stakeholders could be negatively impacted. (RA)
- The company employs local personnel and provides training, to the greatest extent practicable. (OECD)

Example of verification

- The company has a procedure in place to ensure the involvement of local communities with respect to the undertaking of new activities.
- Local communities confirm that the company has engaged in a constructive manner.

Corruption and bribery

Norm

The company refrains from seeking or accepting exemptions not contemplated in the statutory or regulatory framework related to environmental, health, safety, labour, taxation, financial incentives, or other issues. In addition, the company abstains from any improper involvement in local political activities and does not offer – nor give in to demands – to pay public officials or (the employees of) business partners any portion of a contract payment. (OECD)

Requirements

- The company commits itself to good corporate governance principles and implements and carries out good corporate governance practices. (OECD)
- The company has adopted management control systems that discourage bribery and corrupt practices. (OECD)
- The company is transparent towards employees and third parties in its policies preventing corruption and bribery to occur.
- The company ensures that no (illegal) contributions will be made to political parties, public officials or to (employees of) business partners. (OECD)

Example of verification

- The company can provide concrete evidence of the implementation of a company policy in respect of corruption and bribery.

Taxation and royalties

Norm

The company pays all applicable and legally prescribed fees, royalties, taxes and other charges. (FSC)

Requirements

- The company is aware of the taxation and royalties obligations a quarrying and/or processing site has to meet and has established a policy to ensure compliance therewith.

Example of verification

- An overview of applicable taxation and royalties the company has to pay and evidence of compliance with all obligations in this respect.

Labour issues

The issues listed here relate to working conditions applicable to the personnel employed by companies active in the natural stone sector, including casual, seasonal and permanent employees. Most of the issues raised are based on the International Labour Organization Conventions (ILO). The ILO is internationally recognized as *the* authority on working conditions.

Free choice of labour

Norm

The company does not make use of forced, including bonded or prison, labour. Employment is freely chosen. (ILO Conventions 29 and 105) (FWF)

Requirements

- The company does not withhold any part or all of employees' salaries, benefits or any rights acquired or stipulated by law, or any of the employees' documents, in order to force them to work or stay with the company or as a disciplinary action. (RA)
- The company does not use extortion, debt, threats or sexual abuse or harassment, or any other physical or psychological measure to force employees to work or stay with the company or as a disciplinary action. (RA)
- Employees are free to leave the employer after reasonable notice. (UK)

Example of verification

- Evidence of employees expressing that they are not forced to work or to stay with the company to work. (RA).

Child labour

Norm

The company does not make use of child labour. The minimum age for admission to employment shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years. (ILO Convention 138) Children in the age of 15-18 years shall not perform work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm their health, safety or morals. (ILO Convention 182) (FWF)

Requirements

- The company documents the date of birth of all employees. (UK)
- Children helping their family members must not be allowed to do so during school hours and the work must not jeopardize their health, safety or morals (UK) or prevent them from attending school or performing 'school related responsibilities'. (draft UN Norms)
- The company has a policy plan in place to eliminate child labour on its own premises and in its own supply chain. As part of this plan, the company ensures that children found working are provided with suitable full time schooling opportunities, vocational training and other social protection (also for their families), for example by employing the parents or older siblings .

Example of verification

- The company declares in writing that no child labour following the definition in this norm occurs.
- The company ensures and shows evidence of the fact that any incidents reported on are investigated and fully dealt with.
- The company ensures and shows evidence of that children found working are being provided with full time education and other necessary support.

Discrimination in employment

Norm

The company shall base the recruitment, wage policy, admittance to training programs, employee promotion policy, policies of employment termination, retirement and any other aspect of the employment relationship on the principle of equal opportunities, regardless of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, union membership, nationality, national or social origin, caste origin, deficiencies or (non-job related) handicaps, pregnancy, capacity to bear children, marital status or sexual orientation. (ILO Conventions 100 and 111) (FWF)

Requirements

- The company ensures that all employees receive equal treatment independent of their employment conditions, sex, religion, union membership, background, etc. (RA)
- The company ensures that the reasons for contracting and dismissing employees are not vested on discriminatory grounds. (RA)
- The company does not attempt to influence the political, religious, social or cultural convictions of its employees. (RA)
- The company complies with the Ambedkar Principles² to address caste discrimination³ and avoid economic and social exclusion of Dalits⁴.
- Employees are given the opportunity to report on incidents of discrimination.

Example of verification

- The company has adopted a policy confirming adherence to ILO Conventions 100 and 111 or using words of similar import declaring that no discrimination of employees will take place.
- The company can demonstrate that any incidents reported on are investigated and fully dealt with.
- Employees can confirm that they are not being discriminated by their employer.

Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining

Norm

The company recognizes the right of all employees to organize and bargain collectively. (ILO 87 and 98) When the rights to organize and bargain collectively are restricted under law, parallel means of independent and free association and bargaining for all employees shall be facilitated. (ILO Convention 135, Recommendation 143) (FWF)

Requirements

- The company allows trade union organisers to meet all employees and allows employees to hold meetings and organize themselves without the interference of the management. (FT)
- The company does not discriminate against employees on the basis of union membership or union activities. (FT)

Example of verification

- The company recognizes in writing the right of all employees to join an independent trade union, the right to establish and join federations and the right to collective bargaining. (FT)
- Employees that (want to) join or set up a trade union can confirm that they are not being pressured or otherwise treated or harassed differently than other employees.

² Employment and additional principles on economic and social exclusion formulated to assist all foreign investors in South Asia to address caste discrimination.

³ 'Caste discrimination' is referred to by the United Nations as 'discrimination by work and descent', and was the subject in August 2002 of General Recommendation 29 by the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

⁴ In the Ambedkar Principles the term 'Dalits' is used, as that is the term chosen by many of the former 'untouchables', or 'Scheduled Castes' as the Indian Government refers to them. In this context 'Dalits' also includes indigenous people(s) (in India referred to as 'Scheduled Tribes').

Employment relationship

Norm

The company strives for all work to be performed on the basis of recognized employment relationship established through national law and practice. (ETI)

Requirements

- The company keeps a written employment register, listing – among other things – the name of the employee, the nature of work performed, the wages paid and the hours worked in overtime.
- All employees are aware of their rights and duties, responsibilities, salaries and work schedules. (FT) These points of attention are included in any labour contract or collective agreement.
- All permanent employees must have a legally binding written contract of employment with a job description, signed by employee and employer. (FT)

Example of verification

- The company provides a copy of the employment register.
- The company has listed and can explain all case of unrecognized employment relationships.

Wages

Norm

The company pays wages and benefits for a standard working week that meet at least legal or industry minimum standards and always be sufficient to meet the needs of employees and their families, taking into account the cost of living and social security benefits, and to provide some discretionary income (a *living wage*). (ILO Conventions 26 and 131) (FWF)

Requirements

- The company has implemented pay policies and procedures that have been communicated with and explained to the employees. (RA)
- The company ensures that payments are made regularly and in a timely manner, in legal tender and are properly documented. (FT)
- Local and migrant, seasonal and permanent employees receive equivalent benefits and employment conditions for equal work performed. (FT)
- Deductions that are not legally required, such as housing, food or other services, must be explained to and agreed upon by employees before the employment relationship becomes effective. (RA)
- The company ensures that employees indebted to the company receive salaries which are at least sufficient to meet the basic needs of the employees and their families.

Example of verification

- The company has calculations showing that salaries are sufficient to meet basic needs of employees and their families.

Workplace health and safety

Norm

The company provides a safe and hygienic working environment and promotes best occupational health and safety practice, bearing in mind the prevailing knowledge of the industry and of any specific hazards. Appropriate attention shall be paid to occupational hazards specific to this branch of industry. Effective regulations shall be implemented to prevent accidents and minimize health risks as much as possible. (following ILO Convention 155) (FWF)

Requirements

- The company does not use extortion, threats, sexual abuse or harassment or any other physical or psychological measure towards its employees during or after work time.
- The company must have an occupational health and safety program with the principal objective being to identify and minimize or eliminate employees' occupational risks. The program must have the policies, procedures, personnel and the resources necessary for reaching its objectives. (RA)
Following the program, working conditions must be created that minimize the risks of employees to become injured or ill as a result of carrying out their work (e.g. using modern machinery to minimize dust generation or lifts to carry blocks and slabs, implementing safety measures for employees working with explosives, providing shadow opportunities to prevent employees from too much sun exposure).
- It is the responsibility of the company to ensure that its employees understand and follow the procedures for safe and healthy working conditions. (UK) All employees must have access to the occupational health and safety program, which should be available in the predominant language(s) of the employees. The company should explain the procedures to the employees who cannot read or cannot understand the language in which the program is drawn up.
- The company provides adequate working clothes and equipment (such as dust masks, earmuffs) of good quality and free of charge and imposes their use upon the employees. The working clothes are replaced regularly. (FT)
- Employees are trained in the basic requirements of occupational health and safety, relevant health protection and first aid. (FT) Such training includes information as to the relevance of wearing protective clothes and using equipment, since many employees are insufficiently aware of the hazards, lack the necessary training and/or are not used to wearing protective equipment.
- The company provides adequate emergency first aid facilities, equipment and appropriately trained first aid staff to meet all reasonably foreseeable first aid situations. (FT)
- All employees must have access to potable water and clean sanitary facilities. (FT)

Requirements especially targeting women

- The company provides for 14 weeks of maternity benefit to pregnant women working on the site. Women who are absent from work on maternity leave shall be entitled to a cash benefit which ensures that they can maintain themselves and their child in proper conditions of health and with a suitable standard of living. Such benefit shall be no less than two-thirds of her previous earnings or a comparable amount. The company will not oblige a pregnant or nursing mother to perform work which has been determined harmful to her health or that of her child. (ILO Convention 183)
- The company ensures that the employment of a woman during pregnancy or absence on maternity leave or during a period following her return to work will not be terminated, except on grounds unrelated to pregnancy, childbirth and its consequences or nursing. Women returning to work must be returned to the same position or an equivalent position paid at the same rate, and be given the right to one or more daily breaks or a daily reduction of hours of work to breastfeed her child. (ILO Convention 183)

Example of verification

- The company has documented and implemented an occupational health and safety program and demonstrably pays adequate attention to promoting such program.
- An inspection is carried out by a competent authority or independent inspection agency to ensure that work places and equipment are safe and without risk to health.

Working hours

Norm

The company only imposes hours of work on employees that comply with applicable laws and industry standards. In any event, employees shall not be required to work in excess of 48 hours per week on a regular basis and shall be provided with at least one day off for every seven-day period. Overtime shall be voluntary and shall not exceed 12 hours per week, shall not be demanded on a regular basis and shall always be compensated at a premium rate. (ILO Convention 1) (FWF)

Requirements

- The working hours per employee are being recorded.
- The company has put in place a working hours and overtime regulation. (FT)
- Working hours and overtime must comply with applicable law and industry standards. (FT)

Example of verification

- The company provides concrete evidence of the working hours and overtime regulation, showing its coherence with applicable law and industry standards.
- Employees can confirm that there is no pressure on them to work overtime on a structural basis.

Training

Norm

The company gives employees clear job instructions and training opportunities to allow them to adequately do their job and extend their skills.

Requirements

- The company stipulates training needs, topics and frequency for each job and type of work. (RA)
During the training, the employees are made familiar with the efforts of the company to comply with the requirements of this Code of Conduct.
- Training is designed for the culture, language and educational level of the participants. (RA)
- The employees are familiar with the training program and requirements for their work. Employees are informed well in advance about training activities. (RA)

Example of verification

- The company must keep up to date training records for each employee, indicating the type and subject of training with a copy of his/her official diploma or attendance certificate. (UK)

Living on the production site

Norm

The company takes appropriate measures to ensure a decent living of employees and their families who are living on the production or processing site.

Requirements

- The company provides living quarters with a sound roof, with windows and doors and with access to basic services like drinking water, sanitary facilities, for all employees that live on the production or processing site. (UK)
- Families living in houses provided by the company have access to medical services and the children have access to education. (RA)
- The company stimulates educational programs of hygiene, nutrition and other issues that improve the general health of on site living employees and their families. (UK)
- Prior to the employee moving into the house, agreement has to be reached between the company and the employee on any possible deductions from his/her salary to cover housing costs.

Example of verification

- The company must have a procedure describing all conditions under which employees and their families are allowed to benefit from housing facilities provided by the company.

Environmental issues

The extraction of natural stone can take place in very different environmental and ecological surroundings. The same applies to companies involved in processing, handling, shipping or selling of natural stone. The environmental section of the Code of conduct is phrased in general terms, so as to be applicable in as many different contexts as possible.

Environmental management

Norm

The company needs to ensure that the environmental impact of its activities is limited as far as possible. In particular, the company will not undertake any activities that through their environmental impact will have a negative effect on the quality of life in local communities and the livelihoods of the local population.

Requirements

- The company draws up, implements and regularly updates an environmental management plan aimed at minimizing environmental impacts; this includes a plan for the rehabilitation of the site upon abandonment. This environmental management plan will take into consideration all those elements listed below that are relevant and applicable to the specific situation of the company, and its supply chain.
- The company allows representatives of international, national or regional environmental authorities to inspect its sites and all aspects of its operation.

Example of verification

- Up-to-date environmental management plans and regular reports on actions undertaken to ensure a minimum impact of operations on environmental systems.
- Inspection reports by international, national or regional environmental authorities.

List of topics and criteria to be addressed by the environmental management plan where relevant and applicable to the specific situation of the company:

Impact on ground and surface water

Norm

The company implements and carries out production policies that prevent and/or mitigate negative impacts on ground and surface water when using water for quarrying and processing operations,

Requirements

- The company uses quarrying and processing methods and systems that minimize water consumption as much as is feasible for the operation in question. (FT) The potential creation of additional dust problems resulting from a minimized water use should be carefully taken into account.
- The company ensures that, in principle, water will flow in its natural path without obstruction created by way of unplanned operational activities. (DMG) If some diversion of water channels becomes necessary due to the availability of natural stone in the licensed area at a particular location only, new drains following the contours be constructed by the company to ensure that water flows un-obstructed to main water bodies, ponds, lakes, natural reservoirs, etc. (DMG) Prior to diverting the water channels, all options will be reviewed to prevent such diversion having to take place. Any diversion will be carried out in co-operation with an expert third party.
- The company avoids the lowering of the ground and surface water level or any other negative impact on the availability and quality of fresh water for the surrounding communities as a result of its activities. (FT) Best practices in the sector will be applied, to the extent possible.

- Whenever mining reaches to the water table, the company digs a separate well in the mining area itself in which water from the mining pit is disposed with the objective of recharging the water table. By doing so, there will be no wastage of ground water due to mining operations close to the water table. (DMG)
- The company checks the water channels in its mining areas and clears/cleans them before the rain starts (DMG) to minimize potential impacts on waterbeds and surface water in and around the mining areas.

Example of verification

- Ground and surface water in and around the production site will be monitored on a regular basis by the company or a party authorised by the company to ensure that no negative impact will occur. An annual evaluation by an (inter)national conservation organization will be agreed upon by the company.

Water recycling

Norm

The company recycles waste water deriving from quarrying and processing activities to the largest extent possible with a minimum of 80% (quarrying activities) / 90% (processing activities) of the water used being recycled. This percentage is being calculated as the relation between the waste water being recycled and all waste water deriving from the production process. (Ecolabel)

Requirements

- The company makes use of water recycling facilities in or outside the production site to lower the amount of fresh water required.
- When applicable, the company invests in improved recycling facilities to increase the amount of water recycled.

Example of verification

- The company will keep records of the efficiency of its water recycling facilities.

Emissions to water

Norm

The company treats or arranges for treatment of contaminated water coming out of quarrying and/or processing units to minimize emissions to water and negative impacts on ground and surface water. (UK)

Requirements

- The company ensures that all waste water generated is being treated. (RA) The discharge of final waste water resulting from quarrying or processing activities will therefore not lead to or contribute to contamination of fresh water supplies on and around the site. (FT)
- The company identifies and registers the emissions to water as a result of the activities carried out.
- Companies discharging waste water into the environment must establish a water-quality monitoring and analysis program that takes into account potential contaminants and applicable laws. The program must indicate the waste water sampling points and frequency and the analyses to be carried out by an accredited or certified laboratory. (RA)

Example of verification

- The company has established a water-quality monitoring program, including the implementation of regular waste water samplings and analyses. Results of the waste water samples analyzed are being registered.

Emissions to air

Norm

The company arranges for emissions to air, especially dust and exhaust emissions from equipment, being minimized.

Requirements

- The company identifies which activities create emissions to air, the level of such emissions and the effects they may have on humans, flora and fauna.
- The company uses best quarrying and processing methods and equipment to minimize emissions to air, for example by installing particulate filters on the exhausts of equipment or replacing old engines with new. Especially dust can be a common problem throughout all mining activities. Solutions can include the sealing of heavily used access ways, the application of surface binding agents, bag houses and – where water resources are not limited – water sprays and wet processing.
- The company ensures that emissions to air in any way do not contain particles that are toxic to humans, flora and fauna.

Example of verification

- The emissions to air are documented and assessed on its toxicity.

Solid waste recovery

Norm

The company adopts measures to ensure that solid waste is being recovered where possible and effective.

Requirements

- The company reuses, recycles and composts waste in a manner that is appropriate to the materials in question. (FT)
- The company uses the by-products from its production process whenever and as much as possible. (UK)

Example of verification

- The company identifies all possible waste products from the quarrying and/or processing site and is able to demonstrate knowledge as to which waste can or cannot be recovered.

Solid waste disposal

Norm

The company takes care of the disposal of solid waste, especially toxic substances, in a safe and environmentally appropriate manner. (FT) The overburden shall in any way not be dumped in such a manner that it flows with water in the nearby tanks, reservoirs, pounds, etc. or gets washed away to the nearby water sources during the rainy season. (DMG)

Requirements

- The company identifies the sources and activities that generate solid waste.
- The company shall separately store top soil dug out in such a manner that it can be utilized for stabilizing dumps created by depositing overburden. (DMG)
- Final waste is being dealt with and discharged of according to applicable laws on designated areas.

Example of verification

- The company maintains records reflecting the amount of solid waste created and the disposal procedure.

Efficiency of material extraction

Norm

The company promotes efficient use of material extracted. Efficiency in this sense refers to the percentage of commercial blocks (m³) recovered from material extracted (m³) and the percentage of useable material (m³) compared to the total material extracted (m³). (Ecolabel)

Requirements

- The percentage of commercial blocks (m³) recovered from material extracted (m³) should at least be 'sufficient' in accordance with the table below.

Norm	Natural stone	Percentage score: 'excellent'	Percentage score: 'good'	Percentage score: 'sufficient'
percentage of commercial blocks (m ³) recovered from material extracted (m ³)	Marble	>40	40-30	29-20
	Granite	>50	50-40	39-30
	Miscellaneous	>20	20-15	14-10

- The percentage of useable material (m³) compared to the total material extracted (m³) should at least be 'sufficient' in accordance with the table below.

Norm	Natural stone	Percentage score: 'excellent'	Percentage score: 'good'	Percentage score: 'sufficient'
percentage of useable material (m ³) compared to the total material extracted (m ³)	Marble	>60	60-45	44-35
	Granite	>60	60-45	44-35
	Miscellaneous	>50	50-35	34-25

Example of verification

- The company provides an annual overview of its efficiency performance.

Noise and visual impact (in surroundings)

Norm

The company undertakes efforts to minimize noise pollution outside the operations as well as to diminish the visual impact (in surroundings) resulting from its activities. (Ecolabel)

Requirements

- The company addresses noise pollution, causing adverse health effects to humans and disruption of animals, for example by enclosing the quarrying and/or processing site, retaining suitable buffer zones around the site or planting greenbelts, the use of noise barriers or restricting the operating hours of equipment and vehicles. The number of decibels at the border of the production site should not exceed 60. (Ecolabel)
- The company addresses negative visual impacts, such as unsightly landscapes, for example by maintaining buffer zones, planting greenbelts or constructing barrier fences.

Example of verification

- The company provides an overview of measures adopted to counteract noise pollution and negative visual impacts.

Protecting biodiversity

Norm

The company conserves biological diversity and its associated values, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes and, by doing so, maintain the ecological functions and the integrity of the area in which activities are undertaken. (FSC)

Requirements

- The company does not undertake quarrying and/or processing activities in virgin forest areas or protected areas. (FT)
- The company uses best mining techniques and equipment to prevent and/or mitigate negative impacts on biodiversity.
- The company seeks expert advice to evaluate the potential biodiversity impacts of new activities, including the expansion of the production or processing site, the construction or installation of new infrastructure or major changes in production or processing systems. Such evaluation must be carried out before the initiation of any changes or new activities. All evaluations must include procedures for monitoring and evaluating the significant impacts identified and not foreseen during the development of the new activities. (RA) The company has laid down in policies how assessment results are being dealt with.
- The company needs to clearly identify, delineate and preserve areas of ecological significance on its site (UK) and undertakes relevant environmental protection measures. The company relies on expert knowledge to judge which company sites fall within this category and which the preferred protection measures are.
- In mining areas that are located adjacent to areas of ecological significance, a distance of minimum [...] meters should be left between the actual mining area and this area. The company can arrange for indigenous vegetation to create a green buffer zone in between.
- The company identifies buffer zones around natural water bodies and watershed recharge areas in which no mining or other activities (such as transport) will take place.

Example of verification

- The company has a map that provides an adequate overview of current and projected use of land, site infrastructure, protected areas (RA) and areas of high ecological significance.

Land rehabilitation

Norm

The company draws up rehabilitation plans and measures in respect of the mining area.

Requirements

- All new mining activities are being accompanied by integration of rehabilitation activities in the mining plan.
- The company involves stakeholders to decide on the objectives of rehabilitation and the actual implementation of the plan.
- The company is ultimately responsible for the phased restoration, reclamation and rehabilitation of lands affected by prospecting or mining operations and shall complete this work before the conclusion of such operations and the abandonment of the mine.
- Nature species are being used in rehabilitation so that these areas will eventually return to a state similar to that of the natural or original vegetation. (RA)

⁵ This will differ depending on the ecological sensitivity of the area in which activities are being undertaken.

Example of verification

- The company has a mine plan in which rehabilitation measures are incorporated, including a budget to ensure that financial reserves are set aside over the years to realize the measures upon closure of the production site. The final rehabilitation plan should be based on an environmental impact assessment conform the EU guideline 85/337 or an equivalent environmental investigation. (MK)

Operational requirements

Supply chain responsibility, ideally includes:

- purchasing practices
- transparent buying commitment, ideally long term buying commitment
- transparent payment and delay procedures
- accessibility of market information for all stakeholders
- accessibility of new markets for entrepreneurs at all levels of the value chain

Stakeholder involvement, ideally in all of the following stages:

- in code development and implementation
- in the internal (by the company) monitoring and auditing of code compliance
- in the verification (by a third party) of code compliance
- in the designing of corrective actions and follow-up
- in complaints mechanisms
- in the governance of a CSR scheme
- with equal representation compared to other stakeholder segments (employers, buyer..)

Transparency and reporting, ideally concerns:

- pricing mechanisms
- trade terms
- monitoring, audit and verification results, possible instances of non-compliance and corrective action and follow-up
- traceability of a product along the supply chain, for the information and benefit of the end-user

Monitoring and verification, ideally comprises of the following elements:

- participatory social auditing (involvement of stakeholders)
- use of local auditors (who speak the local language and are familiar with local customs and culture)
- announced as well as unannounced visits
- corrective action/remediation and follow-up
- complaints mechanisms and redress.