

## **CONCLUSIONS OF THE 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference on Research into Social and Environmental Accounting**

**JACA, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> SEPTEMBER 2001**

The Conference organised by José Mariano Moneva and Fernando Llena of the Department of Accounting and Finance at the University of Zaragoza (Spain) has confirmed the consolidation of a significant group of Spanish researchers -now totalling almost fifty- interested in the integration of sustainable development into the accounting of organisations.

As a result, it should come as no surprise that the level of participation at the Conference was very high. This observation applies not only to the presentation of communications and PhD projects, 18 in all, but also to the debates that these generated and to other aspects reflected in the attached programme. Furthermore, the participants themselves came from a number of Spanish centres, as well as from a variety of countries including the UK, Argentina and Chile.

From amongst the themes covered at the Conference, the following stand out:

- 1) The seminars given by leading researchers from outside Spain provided a very relevant vision of current lines of pioneering research.

Thus, Linda Lewis, from the University of Sheffield (UK), presented the paper “The Regulatory Framework in the UK Water Industry: Help or Hindrance to Accounting for Sustainable Development”, the fruit of a research project in which Professors Frank Birkin and Adrian Cashman, from the same university, also participated. This work found that regulation, particularly accounting regulation, does not contribute to a sustainable pattern of behaviour on the part of companies, with the UK Water Industry being used as the case study.

For her part, Jan Bebbington, of the University of Aberdeen (UK) offered a seminar on “Environmental full cost accounting: A review of major experiments and the lessons to be learned”, which had its origin in a project financed and published by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). In it she considered the problem of the imputing of all environmental costs in management accounting, with the difficulty of integrating the externalities being shown to be an important element for analysis in each firm.

- 2) The very stimulating debate that was held on the new framework for European environmental accounting that has emerged following the EU Recommendations on Environmental Issues in Companies’ Annual Accounts and Reports, approved in May 2001. This debate was presented and moderated by Carmen Fernández-Cuesta of the University of León (Spain). The main conclusion was that although it represented a necessary instrument, this document contains negative and obsolete aspects, such as the definitions and accounting treatment which, in many cases, rest on IASC standards that have been the subject of heavy criticism.

- 3) The presentation of 15 communications and 3 PhD projects that are detailed in the attached programme and whose summaries can be found on the web page of the Conference (<http://www.5campus.com/medioambiente>). The scientific level of these communications and projects was very high and it is to be hoped that, as on the previous two occasions, these will result in publications in prestigious academic journals (Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal; European Accounting Review; Revista Española de Financiación y Contabilidad; Cuadernos de Economía y Dirección de Empresas; ...)

Given that the presentations covered a very wide range of aspects associated with social and environmental accounting, the conclusions that resulted were themselves highly varied in nature and any attempt to summarise them cannot reflect all their richness. Nevertheless, and assuming such a risk, we can identify a number of basic and very general features:

- Although firms have begun to introduce instruments aimed at correcting their impact on the natural environment, there is a clear separation between this new management and its reflection in external and internal accounting.
- When considering the Spanish case, accounting regulation and those involved with it -practising accountants, academics, etc- have not yet contributed towards improving either financial information or internal control. As a result, it is necessary to adopt a new “accounting policy” in Spain, one that mirrors approaches already adopted in other countries, led essentially by the UK.
- Despite the fact that research into environmental accounting is now a widespread phenomenon, it is nevertheless necessary to consider other aspects of sustainability, such as ethics and sustainable development.

We look forward to all these aspects, together with new advances made by research into social and environmental accounting, being considered at the 4<sup>th</sup> Conference. This is to be held in two years time and organised by the University of Cádiz (Spain), an institution that was represented in Jaca by José María Páez-Sandubete.

José Mariano Moneva and Fernando Llena  
University of Zaragoza  
<http://www.5campus.com/medioambiente>  
[jmmoneva@posta.unizar.es](mailto:jmmoneva@posta.unizar.es)  
[flena@posta.unizar.es](mailto:flena@posta.unizar.es)

PROGRAMME  
3<sup>rd</sup> Conference on Research into Social and Environmental Accounting

JACA 20 AND 21 SEPTEMBER 2001

<b>Thursday 20 SEPTEMBER</b>		
15.30- 16.00	Welcome to participants	
16.00- 16.30	Opening Session: Francisco Gabás, Director del Departamento de Contabilidad y Finanzas de la Universidad de Zaragoza	
16.30- 17.30	Seminar: "The Regulatory Framework in the UK Water Industry: Help or Hindrance to Accounting for Sustainable Development"	Linda Lewis (Universidad de Sheffield)
17.30- 17.45	Coffee Break	
17.45- 19.45	Plenary session	
19.45- 20.30	<b>Debate:</b> "El modelo europeo de contabilidad medioambiental" (EU Recommendation on environmental accounting)	Chairman: Carmen Fernandez Cuesta (Universidad de León)
21.30	<b>Dinner</b>	
<b>VIERNES (Friday) 21 DE SEPTIEMBRE</b>		
9.00- 11.00	<b>Plenary session</b>	
11.00- 11.30	<b>Coffee-Break</b>	
11.30- 12.30	<b>Seminar</b> "Environmental full cost accounting: A review of major experiments and the lessons to be learned"	<b>Jan Bebbington</b> (Universidad de Aberdeen)
12.30- 14.00	<b>(Predoctoral, PhD)</b>	
14.00- 16.00	<b>Lunch</b>	
16.00- 18.30	<b>Plenary session</b>	
18.00- 18.30	<b>Coffee break</b>	
18.30- 19.00	<b>Final results and closing session)</b> <b>CICSMA Activities</b>	