

Interview with Álvaro Portela, Sonae Sierra CEO, about the Environmental Certification of the Company

1- What does this certification mean for Sonae Sierra, the Colombo Centre and NorteShopping?

The granting of this certification by accredited experts is deserved recognition for our efforts, all part of a long and committed process to achieve the best environmental management standards and implement the best environmental practices.

Sonae Sierra's stance is being recognised internationally, as the first shopping- and leisure-centre development, investment and management company to gain ISO 14001:2004 certification.

Sonae Sierra has formally demonstrated its environmental concern for a number of years. Aware of the interaction between shopping-centre development, investment and management, and the environment, we developed an EMS to oversee it, in line with ISO standard 14001:2004, thus satisfying the principles set forth in the company's Environmental Policy ([insert link to Sonae Sierra's Environmental Policy](#)).

This also means that we accept the challenge of increasing our public responsibility in environmental issues: we need to make sure that we keep these certifications.

2- What has been done in terms of Environmental Policy?

In 1997, Sonae Sierra launched the first environmental audits for retail developments already operating, aimed at identifying the associated impact and risks. The Environmental Policy was approved in 1998.

Commitment to ongoing improvement as an integral part of our business was shown by the formal introduction of our Environmental Management System (EMS) in 2000.

Implementation of Sonae Sierra's EMS has enabled us to consolidate our environmental management know-how, especially in this field of business, and to review the system thanks to the maturity we have since acquired and the environmental values we have developed.

Currently, the EMS which has just been certified covers the company's various activities in shopping- and leisure-centre development, investment and management.

In practice, this strategy has enabled us to establish the best environmental practices in such areas as energy saving, water quality and consumption management, air-quality monitoring and selective waste separation and recycling, amongst other things, resulting in significant savings as we develop and manage our shopping centres.

3- How do you plan to ensure that certification is renewed in future audits?

We have restated our commitment to constantly improving our Environmental Management System (EMS), in the knowledge that this will add to the responsibilities of all company employees as we respond to new challenges. EMS procedures include requirements for different countries and, whenever necessary, specific rules are drawn up to satisfy the law in each country.

The EMS provides for internal monitoring, via environmental performance indicators, by setting out and implementing annual goals and targets and via internal audits.

4- What business gains result from the awarding of certification?

Sonae Sierra is convinced that nowadays a business leader also has to be a leader in environmental matters. The company aims to be an example in the wider world of shopping centres, by demonstrating that the inclusion of environmental and social issues in business can in fact lead to improved competitiveness and economic performance.

We are in no doubt that certification makes a positive contribution to our image and increases customer trust. But at the same time it reduces costs and increases our asset value, in addition to the obvious reduction in our business's environmental impact.

5- What challenges does certification pose for the future?

Sonae Sierra's aim is to be a benchmark for the sector, by combining economic development with sustainable development, and thus improving our businesses' profitability.

For Sonae Sierra, continued improvement in our environmental performance is a solid commitment to our stakeholders (i.e. our customers, partners, employees and shareholders) and the general public.

The main challenge we currently face is to continue improving our environmental performance in all countries in which we operate, and to have all of our centres certified within three years.